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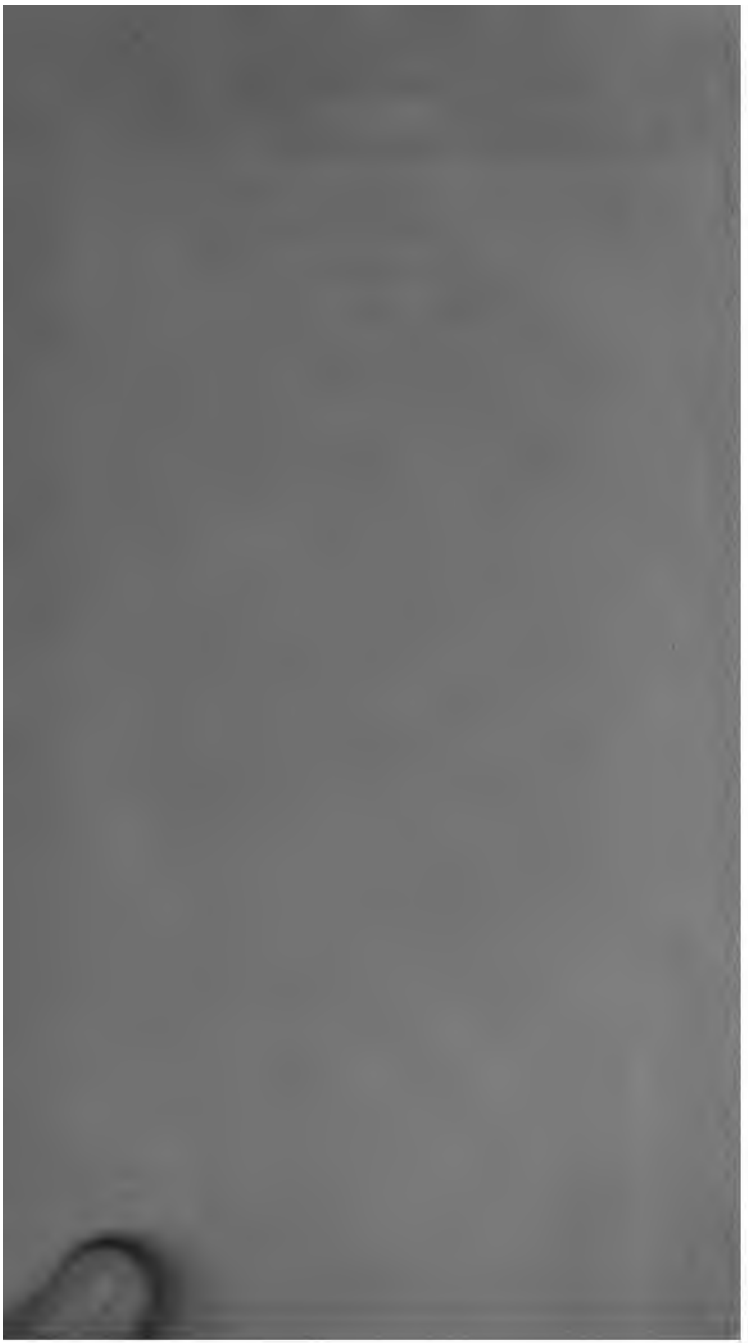

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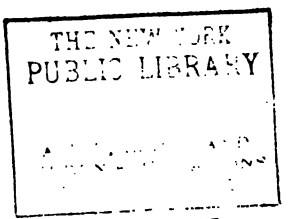

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GHOSTS

A SAMUEL LYLE MYSTERY STORY

BY

ARTHUR CRABB

Author of "Samuel Lyle, Criminologist," etc.

L. C.

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TO
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GHOSTS

GHOSTS

CHAPTER I

"MY dear boy, it is exactly the place for you; and as for the cottage, it is much better that it should be occupied than vacant."

The two men had been talking for half an hour. Duncan Webb had come into the older man's office and said that for once the doctor was right — there was nothing for it but rest, absolute mental rest and so much physical rest as was pleasant.

"There 's nothing wrong," Webb had said, "but I 've been through a good deal in the last two years and I 'm done out. I can't work, I can't sleep, I have no appetite. I 'm sound as a dollar underneath, but I 'm afraid there 's nothing for it but a change of air, and rest."

The older man had said, "Rose Hill," immediately. "It is exactly the place for you. Nothing, absolutely nothing, ever happens there. The main dissipations are watching the ferry

come in and then watching it go out. You sleep late and when you wake up you spend an hour glorying in not having to get up. You have breakfast, and contemplate your cigar for half an hour. Then you walk slowly up the hill for the mail and the morning paper; on the way you say good morning to the rest of the town, which is doing the same thing. You read your mail and the paper till about eleven; the paper will keep you going till then if you read it through and through, advertisements and all, as you will.

"You put on your bathing-suit, walk to the beach, and sit there for half an hour talking with other men's wives about their children, who are a little nearer the water than you are. At twelve you go in yourself, with a dozen others, mostly the children's mothers who ask you to swim to the raft with them, not because there is the slightest danger but because they have promised their husbands not to swim out alone. You sit on the raft and watch the older boys and girls dive and listen to them discuss diving. You swim back, have dinner — dinner, not lunch — and smoke and chat till three; then you may read, take a walk, watch small boys catch small fish from the pier, run down to the Point and buy a bit of note-paper, or take the ferry across to Oldport

and do the Sea Drive. You may play golf if you like. At half-past six or seven you have supper, and read till bedtime, or you may find a Christian Scientist who is willing to lull you to sleep with her ideas, or old, middle-aged or young married people who will play an atrocious game of bridge with you till half-past nine, probably surrounded by children who are sent to bed one by one between hands.

"It is the ideal place to rest: nothing, absolutely nothing, ever happens there that could by any possibility excite you or make you use your brain. As to the cottage, it will be empty till September. It is small but quite ample for one man. Mrs. Neale, who lives near by and does odd jobs for the summer people, will be only too glad to take care of it for you. You 'll take your meals at the inn and find them excellent. It is an ideal arrangement."

Duncan Webb agreed that it would undoubtedly be an ideal arrangement.

Thus it came about that George Duncan Webb arrived at Rose Hill on the last day of June. He had driven leisurely, with all his luggage in the tonneau and Sandy McNabb, an Airedale, beside him in the front seat. He unpacked, arranged

his clothes, books, and other equipment of less importance, admired the view from the cottage, his quarters, the air and the prospect of two full months of complete rest. It was quite evident to the casual observer that, as he had been told, nothing ever happened at Rose Hill.

There is some question as to how Rose Hill came by its name. The Hill part is plain enough, for a hill certainly rises gently from the water's edge to a point perhaps half a mile inland, but the difficulty is with the "Rose." The innocent passer-by would at certain times of the year look upon the roses that then bloom along the village road and consider the name self-evident. But his inference would not be conclusive, for there and thereabouts have lived, since the memory of man, families of Roses more or less related, and it may well be that to the original Rose goes the honor of naming the Hill. But that is unimportant.

Ask any one who is any one at all if he has ever heard of Rose Hill and he will say, "Rose Hill, Rose Hill? Oh, yes, that 's where you take ferry to Oldport," which is perfectly true, for across the bay from Rose Hill lies that famous town where the cottages are marble palaces and where SOCIETY contemplates itself, admires itself,

amuses itself after a fashion and envies nearly everything that is not of it. Also, south from Rose Hill a distance of half a dozen miles lies Nollett's Point, a sort of second-rate Oldport. At the Point are much money, some ambition, some despair and, on Sundays, a million or so excursionists who come to undress, bathe, dress again, and eat, all on the beach, which is very fine.

Thus Rose Hill lies between two centers of gaiety and is of neither, which is as Rose Hill desires. Driving along the broad highway running north and south on the hilltop you would never suspect Rose Hill's existence at all; even if you were looking for the sign "TO THE FERRY" and, finding it, turned down the hill you would hardly suspect that Rose Hill was anything but a lane with a few cottages along it and a ferry at the other end. You might look at the inn, and if you did and were hungry and it was mealtime you might consider taking a chance on it. "It looks like a nice place," you'd say, "Let's try it." If you did try it you would be well rewarded and greatly surprised, for mine host of the Rose Hill Inn serves good food, and serves it well and in abundance.

But if, when you had finished the meal and

were on the ferry to Oldport, you looked back at Rose Hill, you would see only trees with a field of grass here and there, the ferry slip and the inn, and you would never suspect that you had gone straight through the heart of Rose Hill and never seen it at all.

But there it is, full of small gray-shingled cottages, and the cottages are full of mothers and children all summer long. Husbands are there on occasions such as week-ends and vacations; some come every night if their places of business are within an hour or so by automobile, as they are if the offices are, say, in Providence. And, before we pass from Rose Hill generalities to the doings of Duncan Webb, note that you may search far and wide and never find a better lot than the Rose Hill cottagers; and do not let the children's clothes or the modesty of the cottages mislead you, for there is an automobile for every cottage and plenty of good clothes for occasions, and knockabouts for those who like sailing. Culture, refinement, simplicity, a high degree of intelligence, domestic bliss and sufficient wealth are part and parcel of Rose Hill.

And the cottagers love its peace and quiet; for nothing, absolutely nothing, ever happens at Rose Hill.

Duncan Webb rose on his first morning and smiled, for the air that came from the sea had brought sound sleep. He dressed and went to the inn to breakfast, and his fruit and cereal and eggs tasted very good. He went up the hill to the post-office and got his paper, and went back to his cottage and read it — as he always read his paper — quickly. Then he went down to the pier, located the knockabout that, through his friend's kindness, went with his cottage, and rowed out to it. He found it in excellent condition, but was able to spend an hour tidying up a bit. When he came ashore he saw a multitude of children in bathing-suits, playing on the beach and in the shallow water, and a lesser multitude of women watching or giving first lessons in swimming. He saw also two or three men. Men are few in Rose Hill in the middle of the week.

Duncan went home, put on his bathing-suit, and returned. For a moment he sat on the beach, taking stock of the crowd. Except for Mrs. Neale, his housekeeper, and the postmaster and the three old ladies and the one old man who had said good morning to him when he sat down at their table at breakfast, he did not know a single soul in Rose Hill.

He went into the water and under it and, com-

ing up, swam slowly toward the raft and around it and then lay in the water, watching the antics of the middle-aged children. Finally he climbed up on the raft and sat in the warm sun. Very soon, as if by inspiration, all the others went overboard together and raced shoreward. They found bottom and walked ashore and, the incident being closed, Duncan thought of the warm sun that was shining on him and the wonders that a few hours of sea air had accomplished, and as he was reveling in it all he heard a sound behind him. He turned and saw a swimmer a dozen feet from the float; she was on her back and she was going under; she could not keep her head above water, try as she would.

Duncan sprang to his feet and was about to dive to the girl when she smiled, turned on her side, swam slowly but easily to the raft and climbed up on it.

"I 'm all right," she said. "I saw that you thought I was in trouble, but I 'm just trying to learn to swim on my back."

"It should be very easy, quite as easy as the other way round," Duncan said.

She was very good to look upon, rather short and quite slender, but strong and substantial nev-

ertheless; her cheeks were rosy even with her tan fighting against high coloring. Her first glance at Duncan as she came up the raft ladder and spoke to him gave him a quick impression. "Flirt," he thought. Surely her eyes were a flirt's eyes, eyes that in a flash called a male to the everlasting combat.

For a moment they talked about swimming on one's back and then the girl rose. If any one was looking and had an eye for beauty, he, or she, must have been pleased with the picture on the raft — a man more than six feet tall, broad-shouldered, with the arms and waist and legs of an athlete; a girl, slender, graceful, beautifully formed, the top of her bathing-cap level with the man's shoulders. But if any one was looking, he, or she, being so far away, could not see the girl's face, which was very sweet and very innocent when she looked up at Duncan and said:

"Would you mind swimming in with me? I've done it lots of times, but I don't swim very well and I like to have some one with me."

"Of course," Duncan said. The flirt had vanished. He had been mistaken about her eyes, grievously mistaken. She was a child, a lovely, simple little girl. Her voice was low and soft; never in the world was it a flirt's voice.

She dived and he followed and he swam beside her to the beach, very slowly, for she swam slowly. As they came out of the water she raised her hands a little to balance herself and Duncan saw a ring on her finger.

"Married! Well, I'll be damned!" he thought. She was, after all, not a child.

"Thank you very much," she said, and smiled. If Duncan had not seen her wedding-ring he would have told her that he would be glad to convey her back and forth to the raft as often as she liked, that he would be glad to teach her to swim on her back; as it was, he said never a word, but smiled in return and went his way.

Duncan dined, went to his cottage, and smoked with a book on his knees. He was thinking of a sail, but there was not a breath of air, and at three o'clock he decided on a walk, southward along the shore, to see what lay in that direction. He slipped his book into his pocket, lighted his pipe, and, with his dog Sandy dancing about, set forth. At the corner of the next cottage he came face to face with the girl who could not swim on her back, and the girl was pushing a small child in a go-cart. Evasion would have been impossible if it had been de-

sirable; they were face to face and unquestionably bound in the same direction. Duncan was not quite sure as to his status with her, some other man's wife, whom he did not know; but she had no regard for nonsensical convention, and, besides, this was Rose Hill. She smiled and said, "I 'm nurse this afternoon. We are taking a walk."

"Who are 'we'?" Duncan asked.

"My daughter and I," she said. Surely this was a most remarkable child, this mother. She did not hesitate, but walked along beside Duncan as though it were the most natural thing in the world. "Mary and I always go to a little beach up here on Thursday afternoons. I take a book along, but I never read — Mary won't let me."

"How old is Mary?" Duncan asked.

"Thirteen months." That meant that the girl had been married at least two years. Sandy sniffed at Mary and, finding nothing interesting, went off, circling about in search of adventure.

"Why don't you come along and entertain Mary so that I can read?" the mother said, laughing. It was not an invitation, it was simply an approval of a condition which certainly existed. Duncan surely was going along.

A few hundred yards farther on Mary dropped

a curious-looking object overboard from the go-cart; Duncan picked it up and examined it.

"It's a duck," the girl said. "Isn't it a beaut?" The bit of slang was most unexpected, and delightful for that reason.

"It surely is — a beaut," Duncan said, and placed it in Mary's outstretched hand.

"Her father gave it to her." And then, looking up at Duncan she said, "My husband was killed a year ago in the air service."

It might have been an awkward moment, making necessary some word of sympathy for a woman whose name he did not know, for a man he had never seen, if the girl had not made comment impossible by kneeling down by Mary and straightening her clothes and the strap that held her, talking nonsense to her the while. When she rose she said something to Duncan about the sea and asked help in getting Mary and her vehicle over a low stone wall, assistance that he was already rendering.

They came to a bit of beach, a tiny break in the rocky shore, and Mary was released and seemed content to crawl about in the sand and to play with it and the treasures it gave forth, with only occasional trips toward the danger line of the mighty sea and its inch-high waves.

The girl told Duncan that she was at Rose Hill with her mother for the summer, and how much she liked it and how good it was for Mary, and Duncan explained that he had come for two months' absolute rest.

"I 'm told nothing exciting ever happens at Rose Hill," he said.

"Never by any possible chance — that 's one of its charms; it is very peaceful and everything is so simple. It is a tremendous relief after all the terrible days of the war, and even from the days before and after the war. Life seems so very complex in the city, it is almost hysterical, while here it is so calm and quiet and you can sit still and look at the bay and you never have to worry about clothes or engagements or a blessed thing. But I should n't think that it would be the sort of place you 'd choose."

"It was chosen for me, in a way," Duncan said.

"Do you know any people here?"

"Not a soul. I was pretty well played out and I had to go somewhere and a friend loaned me a cottage and a boat and here I am; and I honestly believe I feel better already."

"Have you been ill?"

"Not quite."

"Were you in the war, in France?"

"Yes, I came back in February and tried to go to work again, but it was no go, hence Rose Hill. If I keep on improving the way I 've begun, I 'll see that something happens in Rose Hill before long, if I have to burn down the court-house."

"There is n't any court-house."

"That 's immaterial. Make it the post-office."

The girl laughed, and in a moment looked up at Duncan. "We did have something very exciting happen a year ago," she said.

"Good heavens! What was it?"

"A jewel robbery. It was very mysterious. Do you like detective stories?"

"More than anything in the world. Tell me this one."

"It was at the Browns' — you can see the house from the rocks. Do you know the Browns?" Duncan did not know the Browns, and the girl went on. "They are n't exactly Rose Hillers, they have a rather large place about a mile toward Nollett's Point and they travel about a good deal, but they are awfully nice. Mrs. Brown had lots more jewelry in the house than any one has in Rose Hill; we don't need

much here." The girl smiled and went on with the story, which was this:

One evening early in July Mrs. Brown went to the Point to dinner and returned about eleven o'clock. She and her husband occupied adjoining rooms, her room having three windows, and his three, two of which were just above the roof of the piazza. Mrs. Brown's windows had no roof under them and were about twenty feet above the ground. She took off a pearl necklace, a pin, and some rings that she had worn, put them in a jewel-box and the box in a small bureau drawer, which she locked, putting the key on a nail behind a picture.

The afternoon had been threatening and it was raining and the wind blowing hard when they reached home. A maid had closed the windows and shutters in both the bedrooms. The shutters were of a peculiar construction, having catches on the inside which could not be opened from without. Mrs. Brown raised two windows and when her husband did the same the wind rushed through the rooms. Mr. Brown accordingly closed the door between the bedrooms, which was not often done. The door had swollen and not only was difficult to open and shut

but made an infernal racket when it was opened or shut.

Mrs. Brown was a rather light sleeper and because of the storm which by that time was roaring did not go to sleep for some time, but once asleep she did not wake till after seven o'clock. Naturally she had heard nothing in the meantime, nor had her husband; furthermore a dog which barked on the slightest provocation had, so far as any one knew, remained perfectly quiet all night, in the hall downstairs.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Brown on arising discovered her bureau drawer to be open, her jewel-case on the bureau top, and the jewels gone. She immediately called her husband, who had great difficulty in opening the communicating door. The door to the hall from Mrs. Brown's bedroom was locked as she had left it, the shutters in both rooms were all latched, and there was not a sign on them to show that they had been tampered with. The key to the bureau drawer was on the nail behind the picture and there were no marks on the drawer to show how it had been opened.

Certainly no servant could have been in the room during the night; and, besides, all of them had been in Mrs. Brown's employ for years

and were absolutely trustworthy. The servants themselves were positive that no one of them had left the house that morning, so that, if by some miracle one of them was the thief, the jewels must still be in the house, but of course they were not found in the house. The chauffeur was their old coachman and beyond suspicion; their only employee who was not well known to them was a native who was gardener and choreman. He was not overly intelligent but bore an excellent reputation; he went into the house only occasionally, and then in the morning, to take out rugs to sweep or to clean windows. He slept at home and he and his wife said that he had been at home all that night.

Not a trace of the robbers was found outside the house. The day before the robbery a gasolene launch had anchored some distance off shore and various people said that they thought it had been there at nightfall, but it was gone the next morning; there was some suspicion that it had contained the thieves; but, whether that was so or not, no trace of them or their launch could be found. The police and the detectives from the insurance company went over every inch of the house, questioned every one and did everything that detectives could do, but they shed not a sin-

gle ray of light on the mystery, though in the end they did insinuate that some one inside the house had had a part in the theft. The only hope was that some day the jewels would turn up,— in a pawn-shop, for instance — but they never had. The insurance company eventually paid Mrs. Brown for her loss and the incident was closed.

The girl told the story well. "I think I read something about it in the papers," Duncan said. "It seems to me the solution is perfectly simple."

"What is it?" the girl asked.

"Are you a friend of Mrs. Brown's?"

"Yes, I know her quite well. Why?"

"I don't want to say unpleasant things about friends of yours, but of course she stole them herself." The girl was incredulous and Duncan continued: "It 's been done lots of times, I imagine; I know of one or two cases, myself. Of course I don't know anything about Mrs. Brown and I know only your version of the story, and an outsider's hearsay version of a thing like that may be inaccurate; but if the facts are as you state them, Mrs. Brown hooked her own trinkets, beyond a shadow of a doubt."

"I don't believe it," the girl said, and she

looked at Duncan with troubled eyes as though the idea were very unpleasant to her.

"I would n't either if I were you," Duncan said. "On the other hand, I don't believe in ghosts. You won't tell any one that I 've fastened the crime on Mrs. Brown, will you? She might not like it."

The girl laughed. "I won't — and Mary and I must go. It 's nearly supper-time."

She put Mary in her go-cart and they started back along the path. They came to the low wall and when they were across it Duncan looked at his watch. It was five o'clock. "I think I 'll take a peek at the Brown house before supper," he said. She described it so that he could not mistake it and told him how to locate the bedrooms from the outside.

Duncan said good-by to Mary and then to her mother.

"Shall I see you again?"

"Of course, if you like. Our cottage is just behind yours. Won't you come and see Mother?"

"I should like to, very much. My name is Webb — Duncan Webb."

"Mine is Marjorie Thurston. Good-by. Good-by, Sandy."

Sandy, who had been standing apart, walked to her and held his head to be patted. She leaned down and touched the dog's muzzle with her cheek. Sandy permitted it and enjoyed it. Duncan laughed, but his laugh had a curious note in it.

"I 'd have bet a thousand to one that he would n't go to you," he said. "He 's a one-man dog. I 've never seen him make friends with a stranger before."

"I 'm very proud," the girl said, and smiled and went her way, and Duncan walked toward the Brown house.

At eight o'clock that evening Duncan walked to the Thurston cottage and found Mrs. Thurston alone on the piazza.

"I 'm so sorry Mother is not here," she greeted him, and Duncan heard in her voice a tinge of displeasure, real or affected, such as a well-bred woman can put into any words she speaks. Duncan was delighted to hear it; he knew that it was rushing things a little for him to call so soon and he was glad that Mrs. Thurston appreciated the fact and was willing to show that she did so. In doing it she was simply living up to

Duncan's first impression of her; it was not important in itself.

"May I stay a few minutes, notwithstanding?" he asked.

"Oh, of course. Shall we sit out here or shall we go inside?"

"The bay is very beautiful and it grows more so in the twilight. You won't be cold?"

Mrs. Thurston could not by any possibility have been cold out there.

"Did you go to the Browns'?" she asked.

"Yes, I did, and felt foolish doing it, very much as if I 'd been caught reading a dime thriller." He laughed. "That 's not a good comparison: I read dime novels whenever I can find them and I 'm rather proud of the fact. I 've heard that great men do it."

Mrs. Thurston was still not willing to be completely cordial; there was still a trace of reserve about her and she made no comment on Duncan's literary taste. It was quite apparent that he must do the talking. He chuckled inwardly. He was quite willing that Mrs. Thurston should be quite as chilly as she liked, for the time being.

"I 'd like to be a detective," he said, "one of the kind with genius of one sort or another. I

think I 'd make a good one, too. This afternoon when I left you I went down and sat on a rock in front of the Browns' and thought over the story you told me. I analyzed the facts, considered human nature. I employed logic; I 'm very logical, you know, and have a very fine mind, even if it 's not trained detectively. I formed a very definite theory of the whole thing, sitting on the rock."

"Just from what I told you?" Mrs. Thurston asked.

"Of course. I had nothing else to go on. It is all very simple, really, when a brilliant mind is applied to it."

"Do tell me what your theory is," Mrs. Thurston said, with not quite so much enthusiasm as she might have shown.

"To begin with, can you imagine a more inauspicious time for any of the domestics to steal Mrs. Brown's jewels than that night, when they could have done it so much more easily in the daytime, almost any day? You can't, and therefore the domestics may be eliminated. Mr. Brown would hardly steal them on a night when that noisy door was closed between the rooms, when he could do it on any one of a hundred nights when the door was open; neither would

he nor could he enter from the outside, through the hall door or the windows. Therefore eliminate Mr. Brown.

"The chauffeur, ex-coachman, may be eliminated because he had been a faithful servant for sixty years, more or less, and because he would hardly attempt the robbery on such a wild night or when his employers were surely in their rooms; for, if they discovered him, they must recognize him. An *unknown* thief would not of course be recognized; *he* would be. This leaves the gardener and choreman, a stupid native, as the only possibility among the servants. His stupidity, his mode of life, his record are all against his being guilty. On the other hand, who puts wood in the bedroom fireplaces? — there are fireplaces there, for I saw the chimneys. The choreman, of course. Therefore it may be presumed that he knew the room and its contents well; he had looked about out of curiosity if nothing else. Naturally he knew that Mrs. Brown had jewelry.

"On the other hand, how could he — certainly no skilled thief — enter the room between midnight and daybreak? The entry must have been made through the windows of Mrs. Brown's room, the thief unfastening and then refastening

the mysterious latches on the shutters, to say nothing of opening the bureau drawer without the key. Perhaps he knew where the key was and put it back behind the picture for some idiotic reason at which we can only guess; perhaps he had discovered it and duplicated it by making a wax impression of it. So the only trouble is — how did he manage the shutter fastenings? I haven't seen them — I've never seen a shutter that could n't be opened as easily from the outside as from the inside — but my experience with shutters has been extremely limited and these were undoubtedly peculiar.

"Be that as it may, if a thief can unlock a door, unbolt one, take off a chain bolt, all from the outside, and open a heavy safe — and he can do all these things — he can certainly open any shutter that exists. Thus it was either an outside job entirely or a job done by skilled thieves with the assistance of some one on the inside.

"That opens a large field and recalls the men in the gasolene launch. They came ashore, met the choreman by previous arrangement, received the duplicate key to the bureau drawer or were told where the key was hidden, climbed to the window by means of a scaling-ladder, opened a shutter, climbed in, robbed, and climbed out,

closing the shutter behind them. They returned to the beach, found that their rowboat had drifted away, and knew there was nothing for it but to swim to their launch, for to leave it there would be to give a strong clue. They dared not swim with the jewels and therefore hid them, meaning to return for them on another day. The launch capsized and sank and they were drowned. Thus no trace of the launch has ever been found, nor have the jewels turned up in pawn-shops.

"All this is perfectly possible, even probable. Therefore I tried to analyze their procedure in hiding the jewels. They did not know where to dig a hole. Newly turned earth would be discovered; the sand and pebbles of the beach might be washed or blown away, uncovering the booty; flower gardens might be dug up any day. As I looked about I saw only one place that looked safe and that was under the plank walk that leads to the Browns' pier, just at the point where it leaves the ground and is then carried on small piles or stakes. There was a mass of rubbish under it, dried seaweed and the like. That, I was sure, was the place the robbers had chosen to hide the loot, and I call it clever, deep reasoning."

"And of course you found the jewels there," Mrs. Thurston said. Again she was not over-enthusiastic.

Duncan laughed. "Would you have me explode my own theory into fragments by putting it to the test then and there? Don't you think that, having performed all that hard mental exercise, I was entitled to bask in the light of my deductions for a day or two before they went up in smoke?"

"Why do you ever explode them? Why not go on forever believing that you have the solution of the mystery?" she asked.

"But I 'm sure I have it. Can you find a flaw in my logic?"

"Of course not; but I advise you not to look under the Browns' walk."

Duncan laughed. "Do you mind if I smoke, Mrs. Thurston — a pipe?"

"No, indeed, I like it."

"It 's tobacco this time — not opium."

"You mean that your theory is an opium dream?"

"Not at all, but I was under the impression that you thought so. My great regret at the moment is that we are not old friends."

"I don't think that I quite understand." It

is hardly to be wondered at that Mrs. Thurston did not understand.

"Because if we were I should be tempted to ask you to accept a present from me. If you did accept it it would form a very strong bond between us. I am almost tempted as it is. Can you imagine a more ungentlemanly thing, a more indelicate thing for a man to do than to offer a lady gifts of value the first day he knows her?"

Mrs. Thurston suspected that Duncan was teasing her a little, and curiously enough she did not resent it. Duncan's voice had a way with it, in spite of Mrs. Thurston.

"How could you find a valuable gift in Rose Hill?" she asked. "Perhaps you brought it with you?"

Duncan sighed. "I have explained to you in the greatest detail how I found it — under the Browns' pier. You have little confidence in my logic and — and other reasoning powers. Be convinced."

He rose, went around the corner of the piazza, and returned with a pail he had left there; from it he drew a string of pearls and held them toward Mrs. Thurston. "If you will accept stolen goods, they are yours, and we shall be partners in crime."

Mrs. Thurston gasped. She took the necklace from him and examined it carefully. "They *are* pearls," she said.

"I 'm not an expert, but I think they are. Furthermore, I am pretty sure that once upon a time they were Mrs. Brown's."

"It can't be! It is impossible!" Marjorie exclaimed. "Come, I want to look at them in the light."

They went to the doorway and Mrs. Thurston examined the necklace in the light.

"Where did you find it?" she asked. The chill in Mrs. Thurston's voice was completely gone.

"In this pail, a lard pail, I think it is. And of course I found the pail under the pier walk. Look."

They went indoors, and one by one Duncan took a dozen rings and pins from the pail and arranged them on the table. "I suppose I should apologize to Mrs. Brown for suggesting that she swiped them herself," he said.

Mrs. Thurston sank weakly into a chair.

"Honestly, did you find them in a pail under the pier?"

"I did, cross my heart."

"It 's the most remarkable thing I have ever heard of."

"It is," Duncan said.

"Are you a detective?"

"Never until to-day."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"About being a detective? Yes."

"I mean about finding the jewels."

"Can you doubt it? Of course it 's between you and me. I 've telephoned to the police and detectives will be here any minute. I 'll simply tell them where I found the stuff and let them draw their own conclusions."

"Why not tell them what you 've told me? It might help them find the thieves."

"Why pick on the poor choreman, who undoubtedly has a wife and eight children and regrets his past deeds and is trying to live an honorable life? Besides, the real thieves got drowned."

"Yes, I suppose that 's so."

Duncan picked up the pins and rings and put them in his pocket. "Won't you accept the necklace?" he said. "We could say it was not with the rest of the things."

"Don't be silly!" Mrs. Thurston took it and

held it across the bosom of her black gown. "How I wish I could!" she said. "It's perfectly wonderful." She laughed. "Put it away; don't tempt me. You 'd better watch out for your detectives." Mrs. Thurston's voice had not the slightest trace of coldness in it. She was very much thrilled and excited.

They went out on the piazza and Mrs. Thurston looked across the fields. "There 's an automobile," she cried. "Perhaps it 's the detectives."

"Perhaps it is. You won't tell them what I 've told you, will you?"

"Of course not, but why won't you?"

"Simply because if Mrs. Brown needed cash more than she needed her jewels, as is quite possible, there is no reason on earth why she should not have stolen out in the night and put them where I found them, the A-number-one watch-dog making no disturbance because of his friendship for the lady."

Mrs. Thurston sighed. "Now you 're being horrid again," she said.

"Horrid again! Have I been horrid before?"

"You know what I mean — about Mrs. Brown."

"I 'm simply logical, as always," Duncan

answered. "You see, I know absolutely nothing about Mrs. Brown. Come, let's go down and see the detectives. It may be interesting."

"Do you think I ought to?"

"Why not? I'll see that they don't steal you."

She went and they met the men walking towards Duncan's cottage. Duncan told them that they were at the right house, they gave him their names, and they went inside and, by the light of the lamp, examined the jewelry.

Finally Conley, apparently the chief, said: "It's the stuff, all right. Where did you find it?"

Duncan explained where, and then added, "I was taking a walk with my dog and just as we reached the pier he saw a rat and went after it. The rat went into a hole under the walk, close to the edge of it. The dog began to dig and had hard going of it. For amusement I helped him with a bit of broken board. Between us we dug up the pail. I imagine Sandy deserves the reward if there is one."

Sandy, the Airedale, appreciating the compliment, pushed through the crowd and found Duncan's hand with his nose. Conley straightened up and shook his head,

"It beats me," he said.

"Were you on the case last year?" Duncan asked.

"I was — all of us were — and we gave it up. I had a feeling all the time there was something queer about it, but I could never put my hand on it." He turned to one of his men. "What do you make of it, Jerry?"

Jerry Walsh with the red hair was non-committal. "I can't make head nor tail of it, except there's one thing I'm sure of. It was an inside job, or else spooks were mixed up in it." Jerry grinned at his joke.

"You never suspected any one at all?" Duncan asked.

"We never got a thing on anybody," Conley answered, "except, as Walsh says, it must have been done from the inside." Conley shook his head again. "Why anybody'd steal stuff like this and then leave it under the pier, beats me." He picked up the old rusty lard pail. "It's a cinch everybody at the Browns' will swear there never was a pail anything like this in the house."

They talked for a few minutes longer. Duncan promised to show them, the next morning, just where the pail had been hidden, and he and Mrs. Thurston promised to say nothing about

the finding of the jewelry to any one for the time being. The detectives departed for the inn, taking the pail and the jewels with them.

Duncan walked back to Mrs. Thurston's cottage with her.

"You made up the story you told me, out of whole cloth, did n't you?" she said.

"I told you this afternoon that my brain was in bad shape," Duncan answered, "but it was only a matter of reasoning backward, and poor reasoning at that." Then suddenly at her doorstep he faced her and said: "I 'm sorry. I promise that I 'll never tell you anything but the truth after this, square and honest. I don't think you 're the kind of girl to deceive, even in small things. I won't do it again. And I won't believe it when people say nothing ever happens in Rose Hill. Good night."

And he went back to his empty cottage. The girl stood watching him till he disappeared. Then she went indoors and when her mother returned told her all about the recovery of the Brown jewels.

The next morning Duncan showed Conley and his men where he had found the pail containing the jewels. After that things turned out as Conley had prophesied. No such pail had ever been

in the Brown house and the recovery of the jewels did nothing but make the mysterious affair more mysterious still. Mrs. Brown immediately bought back her trinkets from the insurance company and the officers of the law and the insurance company dropped the case again. Jerry Walsh stuck to the spooks.

CHAPTER II

SIX estimable ladies, gray- or white-haired, sat in rockers on the piazza of the Rose Hill Inn. Three of them were knitting, one embroidering, one reading a Providence paper and one a New York paper. The last two were not reading with much concentration. There was interesting talk going on, confidential talk, for all six ladies had been at Rose Hill for many summers and were old friends.

"She could get any man she wanted," said Mrs. Mills of Pittsburgh.

"I 'm thinking of telegraphing my husband not to come till she 's gone, and ordinarily I have entire confidence in him," said Mrs. Hart of Providence.

"I wish Henry were here. To have a woman like her make eyes at him would thrill me. To have women ignore one's husband too much is a little humiliating." So Mrs. Graves of New York spoke of her Henry.

"She seems quite content with the detective," said a knitter.

"He's not a detective. Mrs. Thurston told me he is n't."

"I suppose not, but he did find Mrs. Brown's jewels and I 've forgotten his name."

"Webb. It 's on the register as G. Duncan Webb, Alden."

"You can't tell me it was coincidence."

"Naturally not. She stays here three days with her husband, not saying a word to a soul, her husband leaves, and, presto! Webster Duncan turns up."

"Duncan Webb."

"What difference does it make? He's a man and the most attractive one I 've seen here for years — I 'll say that for him — and they simply fall into each other's arms."

"I did n't say she was in his arms."

"I was speaking figuratively, my dear, but I imagine she has been in his arms, nevertheless."

"Henrietta!"

"A woman who will go to a man's cottage that has n't even a servant in it, and spend the evening there is capable of anything."

"Any woman is capable of doing anything — anything a woman *can* do."

"And you really saw him kiss her?"

"Yes, I did, and I 'll say this much for them — it was an entirely casual kiss."

"H-m," sniffed Mrs. Mills from Pittsburgh. "It seems to me that that 's the worse possible kind. If they 've reached that stage it shows that they 've been at it for some time."

"I do love a scandal, especially when a pretty woman is concerned!"

"And at Rose Hill!" exclaimed one of the knitters. "It 's the first one I 've seen here and this is my fifteenth year."

"Think of it — finding the Brown jewels and a real scandal all in three days! The excitement is almost too much for me."

"Nothing has ever happened before in Rose Hill to compare with it."

"What 's to be done about it?" asked the woman with the New York paper.

"Do about it! Good heavens, nothing ever happens in Rose Hill! You would n't spoil this, would you?"

"Not for worlds! And besides, what can anybody do? It 's none of our business."

The statements made by the six middle-aged-to-old ladies were for the most part true. Mr.

and Mrs. Edwin Marsh arrived at the Rose Hill Inn three days before Duncan Webb. They kept to themselves and on the fourth day, the day Duncan found the jewels, they breakfasted early and drove away. Late in the evening Mrs. Marsh returned alone.

The next morning Mrs. Marsh and Duncan came face to face on the inn piazza. They seemed surprised to see each other, but the general impression was that the surprise was feigned. Be that as it may, they retired to a secluded corner and talked together for an hour. Later they swam together, dined together, and in the afternoon drove away together in Duncan's car, returning after every one else had gone to bed.

Nice business that, for a married woman, was n't it? — even if Duncan Webb was, perchance, a very old friend. Their playing together for a day was n't very bad in itself, perhaps, but the lady from Pittsburgh had seen Mrs. Marsh's face when she first met Duncan on the piazza and its expression was not the sort with which a properly behaved woman greets a man who is nothing more than an old friend. Furthermore, Mrs. Mills and several other women had caught glances that flashed from

Mrs. Marsh's eyes to Duncan's and they were not by any possible interpretation the pure glances of friendship.

The second day the two had gone sailing, returning in time for a late swim. They had dined together and then gone off for a walk along the shore, which lasted till supper-time. Rose Hill Inn's guests thought that eating three meals a day together at a corner table, alone, was, to say the least, going it pretty strong. After supper they disappeared, and were not seen again till one of the knitters saw Duncan kiss Mrs. Marsh. She did n't mean to see it, of course, but returning from Mrs. Thurston's after dark she did see, through the window, Mrs. Marsh sitting in an arm-chair in Mr. Webb's cottage; and she saw Mr. Webb, leaning over its back, kiss Mrs. Marsh's cheek. Mrs. Marsh certainly did not object, for she patted Duncan's hair during the process.

That certainly was more than enough evidence on which to base a scandal; but that was n't all, for on the third day Mrs. Marsh went into Duncan's cottage in broad daylight and stayed there at least two hours.

Mrs. Marsh, whose name was Esther, looked like a woman who might well be a boon to gos-

sip. She was a little above medium height, dark, dressed with consummate taste, and had a figure that was beyond criticism. She was supple and graceful; she was strong and yet softly moulded; she was slender yet wonderfully rounded; her shoulders were broad, her bosom full. Her skin was soft and creamy, her complexion exquisite. Her hair was a very dark brown and arranged without a braid or knot or part; it was brushed straight back, but not until it had curled ever so little over her forehead. Her lips were red, her mouth firm, her teeth very white and even; her eyes were brown and large, their lashes long, their brows dark and finely lined.

Nearly her whole expression lay in her eyes, and its changes were in her eyes. Her lips hardly opened except when she spoke, and even then they opened very little. This was as the old ladies saw it, for in public Mrs. Marsh was very far from demonstrative. Even in her most hilarious moments Mrs. Marsh's feelings were expressed by the flash of her eyes and the movements of her lips.

The ladies would have been pleased if Mrs. Marsh had chosen to sit on the beach under a parasol during the bathing hour, or, failing that,

if she had appeared in a bathing-suit scantier than anything ever before attempted at Rose Hill, and in it had lolled about on the sand, ignoring the water. But Mrs. Marsh disappointed them, for her suit was ample in every way, serviceable, trim and very good-looking. Furthermore, Mrs. Marsh walked straight into the water with Duncan and with him swam to the raft, dived from it a moment later, and swam to Duncan's boat and from it to a private landing, two or three hundred yards down the shore. She was entirely at home in the water and quite as graceful in it as on land.

It happened that Mrs. Thurston was away during all of the first and second day that Duncan spent with Mrs. Marsh and it was not until the third day that Duncan saw her again. She was on the float as he and Mrs. Marsh returned from their swim. Duncan said good morning and introduced her to Mrs. Marsh. They said a conventional word as to the water and the air and then again Duncan offered his services as convoy.

"Please don't bother," Mrs. Thurston said, and Duncan smiled. He was watching the girl's eyes.

Nevertheless she swam in with them and said good-by to Mrs. Marsh on the beach, but not a

word more than was necessary, and she only nodded at Duncan and walked away. He waited till her back was turned and then he said, "Good-by," and he put into the word the question, "Is it really necessary to be so very unpleasant?"

How is it possible to describe the coldness that takes possession of a woman when she is displeased, to depict her actions, to explain the tone in which she speaks? It is well-nigh impossible, yet nothing is more fully appreciated when it is experienced. Mrs. Thurston's feeling toward Duncan was quite as evident as if she had cut him dead. When he said, "Good-by," she hesitated for an instant and then turned to him and said, "Good-by," and in the one word she said, "Naturally I can't have anything more to do with you."

She was blushing and the blush said: "I 'm sorry I can't. I liked you."

Duncan laughed, a whole-souled, low, merry laugh, and Mrs. Thurston blushed again and they separated.

Of course the talk was not confined to the six gray- or white-haired ladies at the inn. Every

one in Rose Hill knew that two strangers had come among them and were carrying on shamefully. Mrs. Marsh's visits to Duncan's cottage were discussed when no young girls were about and the young girls discussed it when their elders were not about. The kiss, the calm, matter-of-fact kiss taken and accepted deliberately, was damning evidence. It was far worse than a kiss stolen, worse even than a kiss resulting from sudden temptation or from an overwhelming, if illicit, passion. It meant long-standing, calm, methodical sin!

Of course little Mrs. Thurston had heard all there was to hear and had been a little more than annoyed.

She had told her mother all about Duncan and her mother had asked where she had met him.

"I spoke to him on the float this morning and met him by chance this afternoon and he went to the beach with me."

"Why, Marjorie!" Her mother did not approve.

"Oh, it's different in Rose Hill; and besides, it was perfectly apparent that he is a gentleman."

"Nevertheless —" said Mrs. Read, and so on

and on, Marjorie insisting that it really was n't very wrong and that Mr. Webb was perfectly all right.

If Mr. Webb had been perfectly all right that would have been the end of it, but Marjorie Thurston was sorely tried when Mr. Webb's affair with Mrs. Marsh became the talk of Rose Hill. While of course gossip never flourishes there without the greatest provocation, and the incident under discussion furnished the first real provocation in years, it became common knowledge that Mrs. Thurston knew Duncan Webb and had held converse with him. Therefore she became a possible source of information to the six estimable elderly ladies, and others, and was approached, tactfully, on the subject.

Marjorie met the situation without flinching. She mentioned nothing of her meeting with Mr. Webb and said that while she knew him only slightly she believed him to be very much of a gentleman and very attractive.

"But, my dear," the lady from Pittsburgh expostulated, "men who are gentlemen and very attractive are exactly the sort who may be expected to have affairs like this. It is not looked upon as disgraceful — in the man — in these days, certainly not as much as it should be."

Marjorie was not willing to discuss the matter then or any other time and evaded it skilfully. She was entirely willing to evade it after lunch on the third day when Duncan came strolling over the grass to her cottage. She watched him the whole way, rubbing her cheek against Mary's the while and wondering what he would say and how she should answer whatever he did say.

He smiled, sat down on the top step, and leaned against the railing.

"Is Mary well to-day?" he asked.

"Very well, thank you."

"Well enough to be left with her nurse while her mother goes sailing with Mrs. Marsh and your very humble servant?"

"Yes, even well enough for that, but—"

Duncan's laugh interrupted her. "You see I sat down in a comfortable place facing you instead of standing before you and twiddling my fingers nervously, because it is so much easier to argue sitting down. If you would let Mary creep over to me I should feel very much more at ease."

Mrs. Thurston much preferred that Mary should stay with her. She needed Mary herself. And, besides, the idea of her baby being in the clutches of the arch-villain was horrible. She looked at Duncan and saw that beyond any

question he was, even without Mary, absolutely at ease and unembarrassed.

She put Mary on the floor; Mary went straightway to Duncan and he lifted her to his knees.

"Well, young woman," he said to Mary as she reached for his tie, "perhaps you can tell me the truth of this matter. Your mother was about to decline my very respectful invitation to sail this afternoon. It is a beautiful day, the wind, water and boat are all that could be asked for and your mother has previously confessed that she is fond of sailing. Likewise, Mary, the probabilities are very great that your mother could go if she wanted to; but she *was* going to decline. I 'm sure she was! Now the question is, was that declination really based on some perfectly good every-day reason, such as some one coming for tea by automobile from a neighboring town, or a small but select bridge party with Rose Hill ladies; or was it based on some reason which your mother would not mention for worlds? A woman, it has been said, always has two reasons for everything — a good reason and *the* reason. Now suppose you go and ask your mother whether she would n't like to go sailing and whether, really and truly, she can't go perfectly well, and if she would and can, whether she is n't

pretty sure that I would n't ask her to go with me unless it was perfectly right for her to do it. In other words, ask her if she is n't willing to take a chance on me."

Mary, released, and loving variety as all young women do, steered a very crooked course to her mother a dozen feet away. Mrs. Thurston lifted her baby into the air and made much of her. She had much need of Mary.

"Any answer?" Duncan asked in a moment. Mary ignored the question, and had not the slightest suspicion why her mother snuggled her cheek against hers, and, finally laying the baby's head on her shoulder, squeezed Mary in her arms a little harder than the baby was accustomed to.

While all that was going on Marjorie's eyes were looking all about Duncan without ever resting on him, but they saw that Duncan was smiling. They rested on Duncan's eyes and Duncan smiled. Marjorie's eyes dropped and Duncan laughed.

"Never mind bringing an answer, Mary," he said; "just tell nurse to hurry as much as may be entirely convenient so that Mother can go sailing. Mother is going to take a chance; and for some reason or other Mother is enjoying taking that chance quite as much as she will enjoy the sail."

Marjorie laughed, a little guiltily.

Marjorie and Mrs. Marsh and Duncan walked past the cottages and the inn to the boat landing; thence they rowed to the knockabout and sailed away.

Marjorie wondered what her mother would say when she came back that night and heard all about it. She wondered what the dear middle-aged and old ladies on the hotel piazzas were saying, and she wondered what she thought about it herself. She had given way to the impulse of the moment, it was very foolish of her to associate with people about whom there was so much talk along unpleasant lines; and yet — oh, well, why not admit that Duncan's smile had done it? Somehow she did n't believe that that smile went with anything wrong. Duncan Webb, even without his smile, surely was n't the wrong sort, notwithstanding what people said. As to Mrs. Marsh, she hardly knew her at all; she was very good-looking, not just the pretty sort of good-looking, but the sort that makes you sure there is an awful lot of character, of some kind, back of her eyes and her mouth. Of course Marjorie would know more about Mrs. Marsh before the afternoon was over, and in the

meantime she rather enjoyed thinking what the row of gray- and white-haired ladies were saying and thinking.

What the ladies were saying was this:

"My dear, look!"

My dear and several others looked.

"Where do you suppose they are going?"

"I don't know, but I suppose we shall see. Sailing probably."

"Is she going with them?"

"Marjorie Thurston, of all people!"

"She 's a child, nothing more than a child."

"I 'm sure her mother does n't know."

"You go down and tell her she must n't go with them, Emma."

"Don't be absurd. I shall do nothing of the kind."

"But she 's a perfect dear, the sweetest child imaginable."

"She can't know about them."

"Indeed she does! I told her, myself."

"I 'm ashamed of you, Henrietta."

"She 's married and has a child. She can talk about anything."

"And I don't see why she should n't have her fun out of it as well as the rest of us. She 's entitled to all the fun she can get, I say."

"But I think going sailing with them is too much."

"It 's too late now. They 've gone."

"Marjorie can take care of herself."

"Gooseberry, I call it."

"Nonsense! Those two don't need a gooseberry."

"I don't see why they want her."

"I 'm sure I don't."

Rockers rocked, knitting-needles knitted, embroidery progressed, and the subject was discussed, turned, twisted, and laughed over till the shadows of Rose Hill were growing long and the three came back, slowly, for there was little wind and the tide was doing most of the work, and it was a lazy tide.

Marjorie of course knew a great deal about love, for she had been wooed and won and had Mary, but hers had been a romantic love with the glamour of war on it. She knew that there were other kinds of love, less beautiful and less pure than hers had been, but very passionate and strong. A man and woman must love each other very much indeed if they let the world know of their love when it is illicit, unless of course it is only an imitation love, an attempt of wearied

people to find excitement, a make-believe love, a game played for a new sensation, a playing with fire, with care taken that it shall not burn.

Marjorie was very sure, though she could not have told why she was sure, that Duncan Webb would descend to no such vulgar pastime. She knew that love sometimes enters places that it has no business to enter, and that such love is very wrong, even if it can't be helped, and that it does a great deal of harm; she knew that such love is sometimes so powerful that it overwhelms men and women, sometimes numbing the faculties and deadening the sense of honor of even the very finest people.

Marjorie was very sure, though she could not have told why she was sure, that Duncan Webb could not, and would not if he could, give his love unless it were a pure love given to a woman worthy of it and free to receive it. Therefore what manner of woman was Esther Marsh? Was she forcing herself on Duncan? Had she demanded his time and had she some power of enforcing her demands? Had she gone to his house and stayed there for hours against his wish or — but the kiss? How about the kiss that Duncan had given her? Had she demanded that, too? She might demand kisses till the

cows came home and never get one such as Duncan had bestowed upon her cheek, as described by the elderly lady who had n't meant to see.

Oh, well! The afternoon was before her and Marjorie was very sure that the afternoon would clear up a whole lot of things she did n't understand. One thing was sure — there was nothing common about the two of them and nothing unpleasant could possibly happen, and it was a lark. Just think of the ladies on the inn piazza!

When the afternoon was well along toward its close and they were drifting comfortably home on the tide, Marjorie felt disappointed in the matter of her investigations and very much muddled in her thoughts. Perhaps Mrs. Marsh was too experienced and too wise for her. Perhaps Mrs. Marsh was acting and doing it very well. But whatever it was, Marjorie was fascinated.

"I don't blame him for loving her," she thought and in the next instant she was sure that Mrs. Marsh would n't let any one but her husband love her. "Perhaps she is too clever for me, but I don't believe it. I don't. I don't!"

Nothing had happened. They had just sailed, with little talk and that little mostly about hillsides and views and nautical matters, with a bit

of a joke here and there; and Marjorie had not seen a sign of love between them, and she wondered whether anything really could have happened when her back was turned.

Anyway, it was all over now except for Marjorie to explain to her mother and the ladies at the inn and to some in the cottages. Oh, well, it had been a heavenly afternoon on the water, and she would make believe that no explanation was necessary.

Before they reached the mooring Marjorie could distinguish groups of people on the pier and on the inn piazza. Men were chatting together in the evening calm. Women were chatting as always. It seemed as though all Rose Hill had assembled for the distinct purpose of watching their return, of watching her land with the two scandal-makers, and walk with them from the landing to the inn.

All good women have in them at least some small affection for deviltry, if the deviltry be not too naughty, and Marjorie, down in the bottom of her heart, enjoyed the deviltry of which now she was a part; the sensation was unquestionably pleasant. She looked forward with undeniable joy to the questions that the six white- or gray-haired ladies, and other ladies, would ask her at

the very first opportunity, and she made up her mind that she would be mysterious and vague, and appear to know much more than she did know and she would refuse to let them remonstrate with her.

They made the knockabout fast to the mooring and rowed ashore, and as they rowed Marjorie saw Edwin Marsh waiting for them. She would watch very carefully the greeting between Duncan Webb and the husband.

The greeting was a disappointment. "Hello, Donnie," and "Hello, Eddie," and then Mr. Marsh was introduced to her, and almost before she knew it she was walking toward the inn with Mrs. Marsh, with the two men behind her. They separated at the hotel with a word from Duncan about his returning promptly for dinner, and she walked on with him. Not a blessed thing had happened; not a sign had she seen of anything at all; not a clue had she obtained.

She had seen the six ladies on the piazza, too well-bred to stare but nevertheless taking in every detail of their landing, their meeting, their walk and her departure with Duncan. Had it all been perfectly managed by Mrs. Marsh and Duncan, with deep guile, or had it all been perfectly natural? Had she been taken along

on the sail because they wanted her or because they needed her, perhaps as a sort of blind, because they knew that Mr. Marsh was coming back that afternoon, and would arrive before they returned from the sail?

She was running over these questions in her mind; she had jumped to the kiss in the cottage and back again to her sail that afternoon, and was just about to insist to herself that Mrs. Marsh could do no wrong, when Duncan spoke.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing, ever happens in Rose Hill," he said. He was looking at her and smiling, and she blushed as though she had been caught in something of which she was ashamed.

But she scraped up her courage quickly. "You know Mrs. Marsh very well, don't you?" she asked.

"Yes, very well indeed. I have known her a long time."

"And Mr. Marsh?"

"We roomed together in college," Duncan said, and then looking intently at Marjorie he added: "Once upon a time we were in love with the same girl."

"Were you?" she said. It was of course not a question but rather a muffled exclamation, and again her thoughts jumped back to the kiss in

the cottage, and the hours Duncan had spent there alone with Mrs. Marsh.

"Yes, we were," Duncan said, "but nevertheless nothing, virtually nothing, ever happens at Rose Hill." They had left the road and were on their own path. Marjorie, though she was looking straight before her, knew that Duncan was watching her. Suddenly he said, "I 'm going to see Mrs. Brown, after all."

"Please tell me why you did it."

"I have n't did it. I said I was going to did it."

"You know what I mean. Why have you and Mrs. Marsh made Rose Hill get all excited?"

"Rose Hill excited! Good heavens, about what?"

"You know perfectly well."

"Do you realize that I don't know a soul here but Mrs. Neale, Martha, the waitress at the hotel, and you? I have n't heard a word of any excitement. However, I am going to call on Mrs. Brown. I got a letter from —"

"I think you 're horrid to —"

"To get a letter or to call on Mrs. Brown? Anyway, I did get a letter from a very good friend of mine who is related to her, Mr. John

Bowers. He asks me to call on her, he says she is a very delightful old lady."

"She is."

"All of which means, of course, that she did n't steal her own trinkets. Therefore, who did?"

"The men in the boat, but I don't want to talk about that. I want to know why you and Mrs. Marsh —"

"I 'm not interested in the men in the boat. What I want to know is how I can get you to go and call on Mrs. Brown with me. I sure don't want to go alone."

"Won't Mrs. Marsh go with you?"

"I guess so, if I ask her, but going round with Esther is n't a novelty; nor is it — oh, well, you know. If you 'd go it would make it a great pleasure; otherwise it will be a bore."

"If I go will you tell me —?"

"I 'll tell you anything, everything, all I know, if you 'll go."

"When?"

"To-night — to-morrow — day after to-morrow — any time you please."

"To-morrow at four?"

"To-morrow at four. Give my love to Mary." Duncan went to his cottage and Marjorie stood

watching him. She was smiling. Perhaps she smiled because she believed that she was wiser than all the gray- and white-haired ladies of Rose Hill.

CHAPTER III

THE next afternoon, promptly at four o'clock Duncan called for Mrs. Thurston.

"I don't see how my theory that Mrs. Brown stole her jewels for the insurance holds water for a minute," he said, handing her a clipping from a morning paper, which stated that Mrs. Brown had given fifty thousand dollars to something.

"Oh, yes, I know," Marjorie said after she had glanced at the slip of paper. "Both she and Mr. Brown are awfully rich and live very simply. The hardest thing they have to do is to give away their money wisely. Mrs. Brown was a Slade and owns pretty nearly all the Slade Manufacturing Company stock; and besides that she inherited a good deal from her mother."

Duncan Webb and Mrs. Thurston were walking along the Sea-way on their way to call on Mrs. Brown.

"And she could n't possibly be temporarily broke and in trouble, ever?" Duncan asked sadly.

"Not a chance in the world, and besides — but

wait till you see her. She is the dearest old lady — except that she is not very old, really."

"I have no doubt of it. Mrs. Marsh asked me to say good-by to you for her. I think she sent you her love; I 'm sure she said that she hoped very much to see you again."

"Has she gone, for good?"

"Yes. They may come back for a few days later in the summer. They did n't mean to stay here at all, really. They were motoring to Maine and missed the last boat here one night and were simply spending the night, expecting to go on the next day. But Edwin was foolish and called up his partner and got exactly what he deserved, orders to go back to New York for two or three days. Esther made arrangements to stay with friends of hers in Oldport till he came back, but the next morning we came face to face unexpectedly. Neither one of us had the faintest idea the other was here, and she stayed."

"And you made all Rose Hill think —"

"That she and I are in love? Is that what you were going to say? That 's the question you wanted me to answer yesterday, was n't it? — the one you 've been itching to ask and have been a little afraid to? You need n't; I 'll ask it for you and answer it. I am very fond indeed of

Mrs. Marsh, and Mrs. Brown is on her piazza waiting for us, just as though she expected us."

They walked up the steps and Mrs. Brown wasted no time on formalities.

"I 'm very glad to see you both," she said. "I've been trying to read this book and could n't — I don't recommend it — so I tried gazing on the beautiful sea, but when you live right on the edge of it for five months every year it loses its novelty. I was hoping something nice would happen. You 'll both have tea, of course?"

That point settled, Mrs. Brown spoke again. "So you 're the young man John Bowers wrote me about. He says you 're the perfection of men; I imagine he 's prejudiced for some reason. He married my niece."

"Mr. Webb, besides being the perfect man, found your jewels," Mrs. Thurston said.

"I 'm quite aware of that, but I should n't have mentioned it if you had n't. I always try to be polite to my guests. My daughter Georgiana knows your sister very well and says she 's charming. I am sure she is. Why did n't you come straight to me with that lard pail instead of telling the police about it first?"

"Please forgive him; he had such a good reason!" Marjorie said.

"Did he? And what reason could he have, I 'd like to know?"

"He thought you had hidden them yourself so that you could get the insurance money, and naturally he did n't like to explain that to you." Marjorie's expression was nothing if not innocent. Duncan refused to be perturbed.

"Mrs. Thurston is quite right. I was afraid you would ask me what I thought of the whole thing, taking it for granted that, having found the lard pail, I must have some theory of how the jewelry was stolen. I did have a theory, of course, but it was based entirely on the story which Mrs. Thurston told me. Probably her story was not accurate; such stories seldom are. Besides, Mrs. Thurston dismissed the servants with the statement that they were beyond suspicion and she said nothing whatever about you: you were simply a name, you might have been twenty or eighty years old, good or bad, rich or comparatively poor, and I don't know yet except by hearsay whether the lard pail was taken from the kitchen or came from parts unknown, and that of course is a most important point."

"We don't know where it came from. We never had anything like it. And I did not steal my own jewels," said Mrs. Brown, and her eyes

snapped. She was a very lively old lady and she loved brisk talk.

"No, I 'm afraid you did n't," Duncan said, "and of course it 's too bad because I can't imagine any more thrilling solution. The trouble is that nothing, absolutely nothing, really exciting ever happens in Rose Hill."

"As Mrs. Brown did n't take them, who did?" asked Marjorie of Duncan.

Mrs. Brown interrupted. "How should he know? He 's not a detective, is he?"

"I don't know," Marjorie admitted.

"Are you?" Mrs. Brown asked Duncan.

"No, I 'm afraid not. I thought I was, but your being innocent has shaken my faith in myself in that direction."

"At best you are an amateur detective and I don't see how you could find the thief when real detectives could n't. How will you have your tea? I know how Marjorie takes hers."

Duncan stated his preference as to tea and the thief was forgotten for the time being. Their conversation drifted back to Alden and Mrs. Brown's friends there and they were on that subject when Georgiana arrived, and admitted having known Mr. Webb previously. Georgiana was tall, shapeless, atrociously dressed, very

well educated, well-bred, not beautiful, and very much at her ease. John Bowers had written to Duncan that he would know the Brown girls by their clothes, anywhere. When Webb saw Georgiana he understood, for it was very evident that her idea of proper dress at Rose Hill was comfort and durability, and style be hanged. The other Brown girls were not at Rose Hill.

Georgiana contrasted strongly with Marjorie, who was not tall and shapeless, whose voice was always low, whose face was very fair, and whose clothes were always very neat and dainty. Perhaps, under the surface, the contrast was not so great.

Georgiana introduced the jewels again, but with a hopeless air, as though to solve the mystery were beyond human power.

"Mr. Webb suspects me," Mrs. Brown told Georgiana.

"Of course. We all did, but nobody could ever prove anything against you — or anybody else for that matter, so we may get you yet."

"Now, what do you think of that," said Mrs. Brown, "from my own daughter?"

"There comes a launch," said Georgiana, listlessly, "perhaps it 's the one that was here then, with the men who may have been the robbers."

They all looked across the water toward the launch, but it was so far away that it was hardly more than a speck on the horizon. Georgiana had hopes, nevertheless, that it might turn out to be the same one. She was so anxious to have the thing settled somehow so that people would n't everlastingly talk about it and evolve preposterous theories that she welcomed any suggestion of a clue, however slender.

"The men are coming back for the lard pail," she insisted. "They don't know that it has been found, and *won't* they be disappointed! I 'm going down to watch them when they land so that I can see their expressions." The tiny vessel was still a speck in the distance.

"Maybe they 'll tell you how they got into the room and out again without leaving a trace," Duncan suggested.

"There is only one person who could have gotten into that room and out again without leaving a trace, and that 's Mother," said Georgiana.

"My child! my child!" moaned Mrs. Brown.

"But of course Mother would have done it the other way round," Georgiana went on. "She would have gotten out of the room and in again, without leaving a trace."

"*Somebody* did get in and out without leaving

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a trace and it *was n't* Mother," exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "Georgiana, take Mr. Webb up and show him my room and we 'll see if he has any brilliant ideas. You go too, Marjorie; perhaps you 'll have an inspiration, a woman's intuitive inspiration."

Georgiana sighed as though acting as guide to the ravished chamber was a bore, but she was resigned and off they went. Marjorie had described the room accurately to Duncan so far as its essential points were concerned and Georgiana in telling the story she knew so well confirmed Marjorie's narrative of the events of the night a year before.

The door that had stuck then still stuck and the blinds still had their fastenings that could not be opened from the outside; a bolt firmly screwed to the cross-bar divided the shutter in two, horizontally; beneath it on each shutter was a ring for pulling them tight shut. The bureau was unchanged. The drawer still held the jewel-box, the nail that had held the key was still behind the picture. The locks and bolts on the hall doors were as they had been then and the windows of the room were still far, far above the ground and out of reach except by means of a ladder.

Duncan examined the blinds that could not be opened from the outside and tried to slip his hand between their leaves, but the space was so narrow that no more than his fingers and part of his flattened palm would pass. But that, Duncan thought, meant little, for a tool to push back the bolt could easily pass: so simple a contrivance as a long pair of pliers with bent handles would do the trick.

But to reach the window was no easy matter. Georgiana said that the only ladder on the place had not been disturbed and certainly a ladder would be necessary. Neither had there been any marks of a ladder below the windows, nor footprints, nor any marks on the shutters themselves.

There was a fireplace in the room, with wood laid in it. Duncan mentioned that to Marjorie.

"Perhaps the man came down the chimney," she suggested. Georgiana was posted on that point.

"It is n't large enough, not nearly," she said, "and everything was clean as a penny whistle the next morning. That sort of thing is not done by our best robbers."

The chimney was clearly out of the question and Duncan saw nothing that had not been seen

before by a dozen detectives and analyzed to shreds and found to lead nowhere. They returned to the piazza, to be greeted by Mrs. Brown.

"Your launch, with the very same men in it, is coming straight toward us," she said.

Georgiana was not willing to have the launch and the men thrust upon her, willing as she had been to invent the hypothesis herself. The launch was still too far away to tell even how many men were in it.

"It does look like it," Georgiana said, rather apologetically, a little later.

"It 's the very same launch," her mother insisted.

"I thought you did n't remember anything about it, the morning after the robbery," Georgiana suggested.

"I did n't then, but seeing it now recalls it distinctly," Mrs. Brown insisted.

They watched the launch in silence for a moment; it was surely coming straight toward them. Finally Georgiana seemed a little annoyed and said that the whole thing was nonsense, which seemed probable on the face of it.

"But it *is exactly* like the other one," she added, with some suggestion of enthusiasm.

"And it appears to be coming directly here," Duncan said. "Let 's go down and meet them."

"Don't! You 'll frighten them away," said Mrs. Brown, from her rocker.

"Heaven forbid, if they are coming to confess!" exclaimed Georgiana.

The launch was coming on rapidly, whatever might be the intention of its occupants, and within five minutes it was gliding calmly toward the end of the pier.

"I 'm going," said Georgiana. "It 's the same one or its twin brother," and she started for the pier. The others followed.

Two boys were in the launch, which by the time Georgiana reached the pier was alongside it.

"So you 've come back, have you?" Georgiana demanded.

Broad grins broke on the bays' faces. They were wholesome, clean-cut boys.

"We came back as soon as we could," one of them said. "How did you recognize us?"

"I recognized your boat," Georgiana said.

"Some boat, is n't she?" the other boy said.

"If we pay up will you let us go?" the first boy asked.

"Not unless you confess everything," said Georgiana.

"We took it, all right," the boy said.

"What?" asked Georgiana.

"Why — why — don't you know?"

That question floored Georgiana, and Duncan came to the rescue.

"It 's a pretty serious business," he said, "and I would n't joke about it. Don't you know what was stolen the night that you were here before?"

"Five gallons of gas?" The boy was n't sure whether it was all a joke or not.

"Hardly — something much more valuable."

"Well — maybe, but all we took was the gas and we 've brought it back; or, rather, its equivalent in cash. We took it from your storage tank, in an emergency."

"Go on, go ahead! Tell the whole story," Georgiana demanded.

The boy smiled as though the story were amusing. "It was this way," he said: "Bill 's the engineer and I 'm the navigator of this craft. I 'm all right as a navigator, but Bill 's not much of an engineer. Anyway, we were on our way to Oldport last year when the blow came up and the gas gave out all at the same time. We drifted over here and came face to face with your gas

tank and we borrowed five gallons. We expected to pay for it, to leave the money on the pier with a note, but we discovered we had nine cents in change and a twenty-dollar bill, so we just left the note. We were in a hurry and did n't see any one about."

"It must have blown away: we never got it," Georgiana commented, as to the note.

"We put a rock on it," the boy said. "We meant to come back the next day, but circumstances prevented. We did n't get a chance, we were sort of busy."

"How long were you here?" Duncan asked.

"Some time — an hour, maybe. The engineer could n't start the engine; finally she started herself. He 's not much of an engineer."

"You were n't here longer than that?" Duncan asked.

"Not much, anyway. We got to Oldport just about dark, after a very rough trip." The recollection of the trip across the bay seemed to amuse the boy.

"Do you remember the date?" Georgiana asked. The boy thought a minute and said that it was on a Tuesday, about the first of July.

"That 's the day," Georgiana muttered. "Do

you know that this house was robbed that night and that you 've been suspected ever since of doing it?"

The boy's eyes opened wide. Here was adventure, surely! The other boy got up and went nearer to Georgiana.

"Who did it?" he asked.

"We don't know. We still suspect you."

Both boys grinned broadly. "What did we get?" the navigator asked.

"Jewels," said Georgiana.

"Maybe Bill got them — I don't know — but if he did he did n't divide with me."

"Perhaps originally he meant to divide with you, but he forgot them; he left them under the pier," Georgiana said. "Of course when we saw you coming we thought you were coming back to get them."

"Well, you never can tell. Personally I don't wear many jewels, but Bill has fancy tastes."

The clue faded rapidly; certainly the two boys were not of the stuff of which robbers are made. When the time of the theft was explained they remembered that they had been at a dance and offered to prove an alibi, and later they divulged their identity. Finally the engineer asked if

Duncan was n't Mr. Webb and a graduate of his own college, and the navigator acknowledged having known Georgiana as Miss Brown on another day, and he made Georgiana recall it.

"At least we are accomplishing something by a process of exclusion," Duncan suggested.

"If we could only eliminate Mother surely!" Georgiana said.

Mrs. Brown beamed on the two very nice boys. "She suspects me of stealing my own jewels," she said. "Think of it — my own child!"

So the talk ran on till the launch sped away, and they all started back to the Brown house.

"It looks more like Mother than ever," said Georgiana, and before her mother had time to retort, Georgiana spoke to Duncan. "How 's Esther?" she asked.

"Very well indeed." Duncan shot a quick glance at Marjorie.

"And the children?"

"Also very well."

"Is n't Mary Rebecca the sweetest thing?" Georgiana was speaking in the vernacular: Mary Rebecca was the eldest Miss Marsh. Duncan let a nod answer that question for him and Georgiana turned to Marjorie.

"Do you know the Marshes?" she asked.

Marjorie explained that she had just met Mr. and Mrs. Marsh at Rose Hill.

"Were they here!" It was an exclamation, not a question. "Why did n't you tell me?" she demanded of Duncan.

"Simply because I did not know that the Rose Hill Browns numbered among them a Georgiana; nor, I think, did Esther know it, though I can't be sure of that. The disadvantages of a private bathing-beach are apparent. If you mixed with the common herd, and lived nearer the center of the city, you would undoubtedly have run across —"

"Poppy-cock," said Georgiana. "She was satisfied with you and did n't want to see any one else." Again Duncan looked quickly at Marjorie, and found Marjorie's questioning eyes on him. Georgiana spoke to Marjorie. "Those two are as mushy as a pair of lovers," she said, her voice stating emphatically that she had no use for mush.

"She 's not so bad, for a sister," Duncan said meekly.

"She 'll hear from me, sister or no sister!" exclaimed Georgiana. "Will you stay and have supper with us?"

The invitation saved Marjorie. She was sur-

prised that it was so late, she had n't the slightest idea it was so late, she must simply run, she was so sorry she couldn't stay — all in hurried speech, and she took her departure with Duncan. She spoke to him as she hurried on.

"Have n't you any ideas at all?" she asked.

"The average number, I suppose," Duncan answered.

"I mean about the robbery."

"Oh, I see. No, I have n't the suspicion of a suspicion, not a single, solitary idea. The elimination of the launch knocks my old theory into a cocked hat, and there always was a weak point in it. Why should the robbers come ashore in a rowboat when they could have brought the launch itself to the float by the pier? And furthermore, what became of the rowboat that would have drifted away if my theory was correct. And furthermore once more, granted that the rowboat had drifted away and that the men swam to the launch, why did n't they come back for the jewelry that very minute instead of sailing away, to their deaths? No, I 'm through; I have n't any more theories. Why should I, when a lot of high-class detectives could n't find out anything?"

"Logic," said Marjorie. "If only I were n't a

woman I 'd clear everything up by logic." Then she jumped to the subject in which, at the moment, she was most interested: "Why did you and your sister upset Rose Hill so — getting everybody all excited and then —"

"Nothing exciting ever happens in Rose Hill," Duncan interrupted.

"Why did you?"

"We did n't do a blessed thing. How can I explain Rose Hill's mental processes?"

"Why did n't you tell me that first day on the float that Mrs. Marsh was your sister?"

"For exactly the same reason I did n't tell you her first name: it was entirely unimportant, for the purposes of the moment. I 'm thinking of doing a bit of shopping in Oldport to-morrow, which means a ride on the ferry, ice-cream or tea and toast, or both, a box of candy, mayhap, and a drive by the sea. Will you go?"

"You 're not keeping your promise."

"Will you go to-morrow afternoon?"

"You are not keeping your promise."

"True. Esther saw two lovely white-haired ladies glance at her. She interpreted their glances correctly and the awful truth burst upon her. 'They don't know,' says she to me. 'Let 's give 'em a little excitement.' 'Let 's,' says I —

and that's the whole story, honest to goodness. Will you go to-morrow?"

"Why did you deceive me?"

"Did I?"

Duncan stopped walking and Marjorie faced him involuntarily and the expression that he had first seen on her face and in her eyes came again. It was the expression that had made him think for a few minutes that she was a flirt, until he knew that she was not a flirt. Now he did not quite understand what that expression meant.

"Did I deceive you?" he asked again.

"No," she said, "you did n't." And her eyes dropped and she blushed. She was very small and very young and very innocent — for all of Mary, her daughter.

"I knew I had n't," Duncan said. "Shall we take the one-thirty boat? Is that too early?"

"No, that will be all right," she said.

Duncan walked to his cottage, thinking what a simple, wonderful, beautiful child she was, and he kept on thinking of her while he got ready for supper, while he ate supper at the inn, and after supper when he had gone to his cottage to read.

It was n't very late and he had nothing to read. He thought of going up and chatting a while on

the Thurston piazza — but — but — but — but — damn it, he could n't make a nuisance of himself! He moved his chair so that he could see the lights in Marjorie's cottage and sat smoking till they went out.

After supper that night the clan gathered on the inn piazza. The secret was out.

"Why didn't some one think of it?" exclaimed Henrietta.

"Who started it, I should like to know? Who began all the talk?" The question was shot at Henrietta.

"Bessie saw the kiss, that most dangerous kiss, that awful kiss." Henrietta tried to step from under.

"I simply told you what I saw," Bessie insisted.

"It seems to me you said that it was the very worst, the most compromising sort of kiss."

"I 'm surprised you did n't guess the answer, Emma! You 're *so* bright."

"I had no faith in it from the beginning," said Emma. "It was too good to be true, much too exciting for Rose Hill."

Henrietta sighed. "Nothing ever happens, absolutely nothing, really, in Rose Hill."

The others sighed and emitted a more or less

jumbled chorus which amounted to: "At least it was delicious while it lasted."

And that was the end of it — except a well-bred desire to meet Duncan Webb, and the joy that was Marjorie's.

CHAPTER IV

DUNCAN and Mrs. Thurston went to Oldport and shopped, and Duncan paid the bribe of a box of chocolates, and they had ice-cream and tea and toast and the drive along the sea. The day was fine, the surf was high, the tea was excellent, everything was just as it should be.

Duncan was supremely happy, as well he might be, for the stage was set for happiness. There was the joy of well-earned rest, of complete lack of responsibility, the soothed, lazy mind that is the child of the summer sea and its soft salt breezes, the physical lassitude which may be allowed to run its course unhampered. But far more important than any of these things for the making of happiness was the comradeship of Marjorie.

A pretty girl with laughing lips and laughing eyes is never to be despised even when you know that about the third day you will kiss her and that she will whisper: "Oh, you must n't, you must n't! Oh! how can you think I am that

sort of girl? — I 'll forgive you — this time. I know you won't do it again.— Oh, yes, I understand. I felt that way too — for just a minute." And you do it all over again, the next day, with much less talk about it, and so on for a week or perhaps a month, and then you hum the old song, "I wonder who 's kissing her now," and don't much care who.

Oh, no, that sort of girl is n't to be despised, by a long shot. She 's such a good fellow and such a cozy girl and you don't have to worry about breaking her heart. The only thing you have to be careful about on her account is not to get tired of her before she gets tired of you; it is n't gentlemanly or playing the game to do that. On your own account you must be very careful if she suddenly decides not to let you kiss her any more, and becomes a little cold. It 's a trap, but of course it 's a trap that catches only the most innocent and inexperienced.

And if such a girl is not to be despised in the summer-time, how much more precious to a lone bachelor is a girl like Marjorie! To begin with, there is hardly a more pleasant sensation to be found than that which a man experiences when he discovers that a young woman who attracted him the moment he saw her turns out to be a

good, substantial woman, sweet and charming, sensible, witty, educated and broad-minded, a woman who trusts him and likes him, whom he likes and whom he respects, a woman whose every word and act command respect. How delightful it is to know that she likes him for what he is and not because he will kiss her and furnish her with recreation and food and pay the bills like a good boy! how delightful to know that as days pass their friendship will increase as they know each other better and better, and not die from lack of nourishment! There is little wholesome food in kisses.

All of which explains in some small degree why Duncan was so happy that afternoon in Oldport.

That afternoon with Marjorie was followed by many other days much like it, days of sailing, of walking, of driving, of quiet hours under trees or on the rocks with books — books that received little attention. Marjorie learned to swim on her back. There were days of fishing, days of golf, rainy days on piazzas, and evenings with bridge, evenings with lights shining on the water, with moonlight. They followed one another simply and naturally. There were really no people at all in Rose Hill except old married people

and very young unmarried people, except Duncan and Marjorie, who were just in between. There was really nothing for it but for them to play together. And yet Marjorie never lost, completely, the reserve that was part and parcel of her. Very seldom indeed did she make suggestions to Duncan as to things that they might do; and there was always just a trace of surprise and uncertainty in her manner when he made suggestions to her, which he did never less than once a day. It was no more than a trace, but it was there. Duncan recognized it and was glad that it was there.

A month passed and nothing happened; nothing ever did happen in Rose Hill. It was very peaceful and very restful, and Duncan was strong as an ox and slept soundly for long hours; he had moved his things into another room, so that in the morning he could see, through the window, the cottage up the hill, and the lights in it at night when he went to bed early. Very often he could see Mary on the piazza before he got up.

It was curious how quickly the mornings passed, with a paper to read and the walk up the hill to the post-office and a chat with some one whom one almost always met on the walk up the

hill and who was willing to chat, some one with a baby in a go-cart or with a parcel-post bundle to carry. Bathing hour was upon Rose Hill before Rose Hill realized that the day had really begun; and bathing hour meant sixty minutes on the beach and perhaps thirty in the water and on the float unless the day was very warm, in which case it meant nearly all the time in the water.

Duncan had forgotten all about the outside world. He had become a past master in the art of loafing; business did not exist. He had even ceased to criticize Mrs. Robb's ideas of how laundering should be elegantly done; he didn't care, so long as Mrs. Robb was happy. In Rose Hill lay his whole existence, the days that lay beyond that summer were so very far away that they might be ignored completely. The whole world lay within Rose Hill and the country round about it; and naturally, therefore, within Rose Hill was the most important person in the world, and in that important person's eyes was a light, the meaning of which Duncan was very sure he knew. And he knew, too, that he must, somehow or other, change the expression of the most important eyes in the world or the world wouldn't be worth living in at all.

On a day early in August the Webb knockabout crept slowly northward along the shore of the bay. It passed the Brown pier and hardly had it passed when Duncan saw a man sitting on a point of the rocks. There was nothing unusual in that — men often sat on the rocks — but this man attracted Duncan's attention.

"He looks like the statue of 'The Thinker,'" Marjorie said.

Duncan put over the helm and the boat took up its course shoreward, slowly. Duncan raised the center-board and took a long boat-hook for use in case a dangerous rock appeared near the surface. The boat was barely moving.

"I think he 's a friend of mine," he said; "the finest old boy that ever was."

He went forward and, with an arm around a stay, kept one eye on the water and another on "The Thinker." The man was watching them and even before Duncan was sure that it was his friend the man called:

"Coming ashore for me, Duncan?"

"I surely will, if you say, Mr. Lyle."

"Is n't the pier safer?"

The man rose to his feet — a huge figure of a man whose clothes hung shapeless about him, a man with enormous feet and hands and long

arms and very broad shoulders. He waved his hand toward the lake, swung his walking-stick, and set forth to meet them. He stepped from the float to the boat, moving his great ungainly body with a sureness that was almost grace.

"Duncan, my boy, what luck to find you here!" he cried. "Here, of all places!"

He took Marjorie's hand in his and she felt as though hers were lost in its immensity; and yet his strong grip was as gentle as her little daughter's. His voice was low and soft and had wonderful charm in it. He was very homely, so homely that a quick fascination swept over Marjorie; his eyes held hers and she had a sudden desire to reach out and touch them. "What a wonderful man and what a perfect dear!" she thought. He told them that he had come to Rome Hill for a month's rest. "It is the most peaceful spot in the world," he said; "nothing ever happens here, absolutely nothing."

They sailed till the afternoon was far gone. "Don't forget me," Mr. Lyle said. "I'm not too old to sail a bit or play a little golf or auction on occasion." He left them and wandered northward to the house where he was staying. Duncan and Marjorie went in the opposite direction.

"Is n't he wonderful!" she said, a thought that had stayed with her from the beginning.

Duncan looked at her curiously. "In what way do you think he is wonderful?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know; I just feel it in my bones. He seems to have tremendous force or power or something — I don't know what to call it — and to be very kind and big-hearted."

Duncan smiled. "I 'm not much on hero-worship as a rule," he said, "but the rule does n't stand a chance where Mr. Lyle is concerned. Perhaps, I 'm prejudiced. But I don't believe so; other people who know him seem to think much as I do. To begin with, he 's the pleasantest man imaginable; he 's always good-natured and pleasant as the day is long. He 'd do anything on earth for a friend, and more often than not for his bitterest enemy, and he has plenty of them. He has a way of never saying an unpleasant thing unnecessarily; and when he has to he says it with such wonderful tact that it does n't seem unpleasant and it is n't so much his words as his voice. He is my idea of a perfect gentleman, whatever that is. His heart is soft, and as big as a barrel; he 's as simple and direct as a little child, and he could n't do a dishonorable thing to save his life. And with it all

he has a mind that is n't surpassed, or equaled, by any that I have ever known or heard of. He has more common sense than a dozen average men; he knows more than a flock of encyclopedias; he has all the good points of a great minister and a great doctor and —"

"Stop! That 's enough!" Marjorie cried. "I thought I liked him, but I don't. Ordinary perfection and massive intellects are bad enough, but I could never live up to such a superhuman being. What is he? — a butcher or a baker or something?"

Duncan went on, unperturbed: "He 's a philosopher, a student, a scientist, and a few other things; also he is, by profession, a criminologist and a criminal-lawyer, the greatest in the country, I suppose. He knows crime and the strength and weakness of humanity as you and I know the alphabet; in the court-room he is a holy terror, he can turn a witness inside out and back again. Other lawyers and most judges have a good deal of fear and a wholesome respect for him; and yet outside of business hours he 's just a sweet, happy old man, and he is n't very old at that. He plays rotten auction and worse golf."

Marjorie laughed and they walked slowly up

Rose Hill's only road and turned from it to their path, discussing Samuel Lyle. They passed Duncan's cottage and came to Marjorie's.

"It 's been a lovely afternoon, and I'm terribly excited about Mr. Lyle," Marjorie said.

"It has been a pleasant day. I think to-morrow is going to be just like it. We haven't been to Oldport for a long time; shall we drive over?"

It was a simple question, such a question as Duncan had asked every day for a month, but as he asked it again he watched Marjorie closely. He knew and had known for many days that before very long such a question as he asked then would bring him face to face with his great task. He knew now from the quick color that came in Marjorie's cheeks that the time had come: they had reached the barrier. He knew that Marjorie had drifted along, evading the problem and her responsibility, pretending to herself and to him and to the world that the problem did not exist and could never exist, when she knew full well, deep down in her heart, that it did exist and that her pretense had become futile.

They stood facing each other, the tall, strong man and the little girl in black. She was not, really, a very small woman, but she seemed small

to Duncan, who was very large. To him her body seemed sometimes very slender and straight and very soft and supple; and again, when of course she had not changed at all, it seemed full of curves and very strong. She was beautifully formed, exquisitely rounded; her neck was long and graceful, her hair came down on it in tiny ringlets, and her head was set proudly upon it, and she held it high, with its great mass of brown hair. She stood straight, her shoulders were square and her bosom was firm and full but not too full. She was most skilfully made, and of the finest materials.

Her cheeks were round; there was a dimple in one of them and freckles here and there on both of them. Her chin was delicate and yet extremely firm. Her lips were long and very expressive; they were lips that smiled, a great deal, divinely, and sometimes showed, very plainly, a moment's small unhappiness. Her eyes were blue and large, and they were eyes that had the girl's soul and heart in them, eyes that laughed and eyes that sometimes had great sorrow in them; they told plainly enough of a woman who must never be hurt or harmed, of a woman who must be dealt with gently, who must be protected, always.

Marjorie Thurston was a beautiful woman, but her beauty lay not so much in the lines of her features as in the story those features told of the sweet, pure, gentle woman herself. Duncan, as he stood before her, knew that, and knew that his task required all his determination, all his tact, and all his ability in its accomplishment if he was to win her and not simply wound still more a heart already sorely wounded.

When he asked her to go to Oldport with him on the next afternoon, as they had gone before, her heart sank and for an instant her courage fled; but it was for only an instant, and as it rose again her color rose with it, rose high till her cheeks were crimson. Even then, woman-like, she evaded the issue that she knew she must meet, if not then, before many days had passed.

"I 'm sorry," she said, "but I 'm afraid I can't go — to-morrow."

Her eyes had been downcast and she raised them, hesitatingly, and found his waiting for hers; and for a moment she stood so, acknowledging that the barrier was between them.

Duncan demanded full confession from her. "Because you have something else to do?" he asked.

Marjorie shook her head ever so slightly.

"Because you do not like Oldport and ice-cream and tea and the surf and a small box of chocolates?"

"No," she said, "that is not the reason."

"Because you have been too kind to me, given me too much of your time; because to keep on doing so would be to admit the possibility of things happening that in reality can never happen?"

"I must not," she said, and her words were a complete admission.

"You mean that your life is finished, that it will always be as it is now; that you will never love again, never be married again, that you can never love me or any other man because of what has gone before?"

"Don't you understand that that must be so?"

"Yes, of course I understand. I understand how you believe that your broken heart can never heal, but I know that it will heal. I know that you are young, so young that at your age most girls have not given a thought to marriage and love is to them only a romantic plaything. Fate has been cruel to you, but the end is not yet; you are just beginning to live."

"Oh, please, please don't!" Marjorie's voice was nearly a sob.

"I must. I love you — you know that — I would have told you so long ago if it had not been for — for what has gone before. Is it not true that your knowing that has brought us face to face with our two lives? Has n't it made you understand that you and I must work out our future together? I know that you do not love me, but I think that the fear that you might love me, the sudden realization that there is still love in the world, perhaps even for you, has made you do what you have done —" A smile came on Duncan's lips —"has made you decide that you and I cannot play together any more, as we have been playing, because, if you did so you might love again."

Marjorie smiled, very sadly, and shook her head. "No, Duncan, we can be — friends — that 's all. You must understand." And then she turned and went indoors, as though to stay there with him any longer were impossible, as though she must not let him see the grief which overwhelmed her, the grief that had been always with her since that day a year before, and would always be with her.

On the inn piazza six ladies and more, gray- and white-haired, had seen Samuel Lyle come ashore with Duncan and Marjorie.

"What a remarkable-looking man! Who is he?" asked Mrs. Mills of Pittsburgh.

No one knew, but there were a few conjectures, which, though they led nowhere, at least suggested that there was something worth investigating. From the subject of Mr. Lyle the six ladies, or more, came back to ground on which their footing was firm and their information ample. The topic of Duncan and the young widow was interesting.

"It was simply an incident, a minor incident, in her life," said Mrs. Hart of Providence. Of course every one understood that she referred to Marjorie's short married life.

"I should hardly say that," said the lady from New York.

"Not now, of course," admitted Mrs. Hart; "but she will look at it that way when she's thirty, and probably long before that."

"Exactly, and quite rightly, too. Why, she's only twenty-three! Think of it!"

"She's a dear — the sweetest thing! I love her."

That was the general feeling.

"And a mere child, notwithstanding what she's been through. Why, her mother had to

ell her that she *must* wear stockings in bath-ng."

"She looks much better in them."

"Of course — any woman does — but she was mply doing what all the young girls are doing is year. She is still only a young girl, not-ithstanding her child."

"Even when she put them on she rolled them low the knee; it was quite chic."

"And her dresses — exactly what a young rl would wear."

"I approve entirely. Imagine that baby in idow's weeds!"

"It *was* a shock to see her dancing, until I ought it over, and then I was glad. Why ould n't she? Life is just beginning for her."

"I suppose there 's a lot of cases like hers, war arriages, the forced youthful sentiment of a mo-ent. I hope none of them turn out worse than rs."

"What an awful idea!" a chorus protested.

"They might very well," the speaker insisted. From that general subject they came down to ass tacks.

"Of course you can't tell whether anything ill come of it."

"Certainly he is very much attached to her and —"

"Summer-time! And who else is there in Rose Hill for them to play with?"

"And she likes him, certainly. There can be no question of that."

"Nothing could be more satisfactory. They are admirably suited to each other."

"He 's very attractive and a very estimable man."

"I remember distinctly what you said about him — and his sister."

"Well, how was I to know? Tell me that."

"But your description of that kiss! I shall never forget it."

The lady who had seen the kiss laughed. "What fools we were!" she said.

"Has he money?"

"I understand he has."

"That 's entirely unimportant."

"I don't agree with you; and you don't believe it, yourself."

The lady did not deny that.

"She 's not fool enough to eat her heart out for a twenty-year-old love affair." The idea was there, though the words were a little mixed.

"She won't," said the practical lady from

Pittsburgh. "She will not put off the old and take on the new without a struggle, but she 'll do it, never fear; she has entirely too much good sense not to, eventually. But she won't do it quickly. It is much better she should not. It will take five years, at least."

That seemed to be the consensus of opinion, except that five years was thought to be a little long.

If the practical lady from Pittsburgh was correct, Duncan had no light task on his hands.

The next morning when Marjorie went to the beach to swim she was worried and unhappy. She had not seen Duncan since she had left him the afternoon before; she had stayed indoors all morning so that she should not see him, but she knew that she could not escape him at the beach. But she *must* swim; and in any case she must see him again, sooner or later. There was no use trying to evade him; she must face her problem fairly, putting it off could do no good.

What would he do? What would he say? She was very sure that he was not a man who could be turned away easily, once he had made up his mind, and she knew very well that he had made up his mind to have her.

She could not be rude to him; she could not

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evade him methodically. He was a gentleman — a fine, clean, upright man — and he had acted honorably toward her. She knew that she had no right to be offended at what he had said to her. It 's a man's right to win a woman if he can, whatever the circumstances may be; he is under no obligation to a woman's love for a man who is dead.

Widow! She muttered the word over and over again. Gay, foxy, clever widows, young widows, the gayest of gay women, the most dangerous women in the world, for men. She, Marjorie, was a widow, a young widow, but she was not such a widow as the world talks of and admires for her skill in tantalizing and capturing men.

Marjorie was, too — though she did not think of that — fresh with the bloom of youth, had youth's vitality and youth's power of recuperation. Red blood flowed in her veins; good health was hers; her spirit was high. And, more important than any of these, she had had a taste of married life. Surely everything was against her in the battle she had elected to wage.

That morning, when she reached the beach, she looked about quickly to see who was there, so that she might choose where to sit on the

sand. But the choice was not left to her. Duncan saw her and came to her.

"Come over with Mr. Lyle," he said. "He 's more fun than a circus." Marjorie went with him.

Mr. Lyle made no attempt to rise, but took Marjorie's hand and inclined his head over it, a most respectful greeting.

"A great tease, this friend of yours," he said.

"What 's he doing?" Marjorie asked.

Mr. Lyle pointed to a plan of two bedrooms sketched in the sand. "He 's made up a cock-and-bull story about a jewelry robbery, says he found the jewels, and wants me to tell him who took them."

"Who did take them? The story is perfectly true," Marjorie said.

"But you have n't heard a word of it," Mr. Lyle exclaimed.

"Oh, yes I have! I know it by heart. He could n't possibly make up a harder one."

"So somebody really got into the room and out again, taking the jewels with him, just as Duncan has described it to me?"

"Yes, some one did."

"Then the answer is simple. It was a ghost or the lady herself."

"Ha, ha! what did I tell you?" Duncan laughed.

"It could n't possibly be Mrs. Brown."

"Then I believe in ghosts, at last!" said Mr. Lyle. He looked hard at Marjorie, his lips twisting themselves into all manner of queer shapes. "Are you sure you two are n't in cahoots and teasing me a bit?"

"It 's the solemn truth, every word of it," Marjorie insisted.

"M-m-m-m — so," muttered Mr. Lyle. "If that 's so, it *is* interesting, is n't it?"

"I have no faith in the theory that the shutters could n't be opened from the outside," Duncan said. "Maybe I could n't do it, but I believe a clever thief with a mechanical turn of mind could." Then Duncan took a chance. "I 'll take you down and let you look at them if you 'd like to go," he said.

"Oh, please do!" Marjorie cried.

But Mr. Lyle shook his head. "No, no," he said. "Leave business alone in the summer-time at Rose Hill. I 'm here to rest; and, besides, I 'm not a detective."

"Then perhaps you 'd like to go over to Oldport with Mrs. Thurston and me this afternoon?" Duncan said. "You get a ferry ride,

ice-cream cones, tea and toast, a drive beside the bounding billows. You see the outside of many palaces and Mrs. Thurston gets a box of chocolates."

"That sounds very attractive," said Mr. Lyle.

"Can you be ready to take the one-thirty boat?"

"I will be ready," said Mr. Lyle.

"That 's settled. Let 's go in."

Marjorie rose from the sand and smiled at Mr. Lyle, which helped her to evade Duncan's eyes. But she could not evade them long.

"Are you mad or are you glad?" he asked.

She did not answer him, but went into the water; and it was not until they were out again and on their way up the hill that she said, "I 'll go this time, because Mr. Lyle is going too."

The afternoon in Oldport was, on the surface, much as the others before it had been. No act or word of Duncan's suggested that his and Marjorie's relations were changed in the least degree; their meeting with the barrier between them on the afternoon before was as though it had never happened, and yet Marjorie well knew that Duncan was thinking of her and of the barrier every minute, just as she was, and that his gaiety was assumed, as hers was.

Until the night before she had never once admitted to herself, during the year that had elapsed since the terrible news came, that the order of her life might ever change. Duncan had come into her life a month before and very soon after that the barrier had risen before her, a barrier that was to her just as the square white fence on the piazza was to Mary, a barrier that surrounded her completely and could not be scaled.

But, unlike Mary, Marjorie had no desire to leave her inclosure. She was content, content with the memories of her short romance; the barrier was there by her own wish, a barrier that protected her and her heart; she refused to admit to herself that there could be, beyond the barrier, such happiness as was within it — with her memories and her husband's child. But Duncan had told her that she was wrong and she knew that the world would think that she was wrong, and she knew that she must face Duncan and the world and defend herself and her memories against them.

When Duncan had told her of his love she had gone indoors and when she closed her eyes that night she was no longer a child but was a woman; Duncan's words had wrought the change that her

marriage and the coming of Mary had not accomplished. She could evade her future no longer.

In Oldport, on their ride, Mr. Lyle made all the difference in the world. They talked to him and, even when they spoke to each other, it was for his benefit. If Mr. Lyle suspected that there was anything but simple friendship between them, or ever would be, he gave no sign of it. They talked mostly of the affairs of the moment — the ice-cream and tea and chocolates, relics and trees, summer palaces, the sea and surf and air — but Duncan referred, at odd moments, to the struggle between Mrs. Brown and the ghost. His point was perfectly apparent: if he could get Mr. Lyle interested, actively, in the mystery of the Brown jewels, then something would happen, at last, in Rose Hill. Perhaps Mr. Lyle was no detective — it all depends on what a detective is — but one thing was sure: get Mr. Lyle at work, give him the facts and let him see and talk to the people involved, and something would happen — what, Heaven only knew. Duncan was keen for the adventure.

"He could work it out any pleasant day, if he wanted to," he said to Marjorie, positively and as though Mr. Lyle could not hear.

Mr. Lyle looked at Marjorie as though they must suffer together.

"Ask Mr. Lyle to tell you what happened to Jerry Doyle," Duncan went on, in no way discouraged.

"What happened to Jerry Doyle?" Marjorie asked, gazing innocently at Mr. Lyle.

Duncan did n't wait for Mr. Lyle to answer: "You see, it was this way. A gent named Ray Smith got arrested for burglary and as he had no cash the court asked Mr. Lyle to defend him, gratis. It looked bad for Smithy, very bad, especially after the prosecution put Jerry Doyle on the stand. Jerry gave evidence that clinched matters and Mr. Lyle cross-questioned him up and down and backward and forward and could n't do a thing with him and was just going to sit down and let Jerry leave the stand when he changed his mind and asked Jerry one simple little question that Jerry could n't answer, and then things began to happen and the first thing you know Jerry was pinched for the crime and —"

"There, there!" said Mr. Lyle. "It was all very simple, and all in the day's work. Let 's don't talk shop."

"I suppose this Brown business is all very

simple, too," Duncan said, "but I 'd sure like to see Mrs. Brown put on the gloves with the ghost, with you the third man, or rather the third party, in the ring."

Mr. Lyle spoke to Marjorie. "Some time when the Browns are away and this pest"— Duncan — "is n't about, take me down and show me the Brown house. Perhaps you and I can have some fun together."

Duncan grinned. He had a deep-seated suspicion that, rest or no rest, old Sammy Lyle could n't keep away from a real, thrilling mystery very long, when it was right under his nose.

The next day Marjorie met Mrs. Brown at the post-office and said to her, with deep guile, that she would love to take the dearest old man in the world to call on her some afteroon. "He 's a dear," Marjorie said, "and I 'm sure you 'd like him very much." Mrs. Brown said that she would enjoy nothing so much as meeting Mr. Lyle.

Marjorie chose a roundabout way home and by the merest chance found Mr. Lyle on his piazza. She was controlled by two emotions, the thrill of a real adventure with such a great man as Mr. Lyle and the relief that such an adventure would

afford from the problem that Duncan insisted must be solved — and solved his way.

Of course it would not be solved his way, that was impossible. but she did not like the thought of the — the — the — call it arguing, that she must go through. She was not quite sure why she must argue with Duncan, but she was very sure that she must. She knew that he would not respect her simple statement: "You must understand, and not — not say anything more."

"We 're going to call on Mrs. Brown," she said, when Mr. Lyle, seeing her, put aside his paper and came down the steps.

"Mrs. Brown? — Mrs. Brown? Oh, yes, of course, but —"

"Please don't be cross. I saw Mrs. Brown and I simply could n't help it. I did n't say a word about — about your being a detective."

Mr. Lyle's eyes sparkled and his lips twisted and twisted.

"Nice people, the Browns?" he asked.

"Awfully nice."

"Relatives of John Bowers, are n't they? Must be nice people." Mr. Lyle's lips twisted themselves into all sorts of queer shapes and finally into a smile. "Suppose — suppose — you and I — just for fun, without telling a soul about

it, not even Duncan, see if we can dig anything out of this business — very informally, just for our own amusement."

"It would be simply wonderful," Marjorie cried. "You and I. Heavens, how absurd! I mean the 'I' part."

"You let me know when we're to go. We won't say a word about what we're doing, we'll just make a little call. We won't even let them suspect I'm a detective, and then we'll lay our plans." Mr. Lyle smiled again. "It's a very interesting case, very indeed, if I understand it correctly."

"Just think — two days ago I didn't even know you, and now we're going into business together!" Marjorie cried.

"Not business, young lady, not business — pleasure. I'm a queer old man. I'm like a boy with a dime-novel thriller: somehow I can't let go till I've read the last page. I've been at this sort of thing all my life, and it's getting to be a long life, but I get more interested in mysteries now than when I was young and just beginning. They are puzzles, just like jig-saw puzzles, or things that go together or come apart if you know how to do it, and you know how some people work over them hour after hour, till

they 're done, and then forget them. My puzzles have people for the pieces. That 's one reason why I want you for a partner: you are a very puzzling young woman and I want to know you better, very much better." And then, looking straight into Marjorie's amazed eyes, he said: "Oh yes, I know all about it and I 'm wondering how it is going to come out. Don't worry; I would not interfere for the world, even if I could."

A sudden wave of indignation swept over Marjorie.

"Has Duncan — said — said — anything to you — about me?"

"Not a word; nor has any one else."

"Then how — how —?"

"Eyes, my dear, eyes; and a voice, a very wonderful voice."

"You — you — frighten me."

"You must not be frightened. I have no children, and I love children, such as you, and I want all children to be happy. I hoped as soon as I knew you that we should be friends. Let 's have our little adventure together."

Marjorie gazed into the eyes of the great criminal lawyer. She saw his smile, and she knew that he was her friend, a friend whom she could

trust implicitly, and at that moment she felt like a very small child indeed. Marjorie had no father.

"It will be wonderful," she said, and as she walked away Mr. Lyle gazed after her.

"A child, a very sweet, lovely child who is just becoming a woman; and when she is a woman —" Mr. Lyle's thoughts wandered into an interrogation. Even Mr. Lyle was wrong sometimes: Marjorie was already a woman.

The next day they called on Mrs. Brown. Mr. Brown was not at home, but Georgiana was and made friends with Mr. Lyle quickly. Duncan, left behind without ceremony and in ignorance that the two were together, made a miserable afternoon of it. The afternoon before Marjorie had had real, open and above-board business of her own and he could make no complaint at not being with her, but when he had suggested golf for that afternoon and his invitation had been declined and no excuses offered and Marjorie was unwilling to discuss the matter, or any other matter, seriously, Duncan knew that if she were able to face him always with the defense of banter and indifference then his task would be hard indeed.

But fortune favored him, for coming back from the Browns' Mr. Lyle said: "I 've been thinking that it's just a little bit unfair to keep Duncan out of the fun, if there is to be any fun. Duncan's a nice boy."

Marjorie thought — but what did Marjorie think? Had she, down in the bottom of her heart, wanted Duncan taken into their secret or was she glad that her great adventure would take her away from him and away from the problem that he had told her they must solve together? Perhaps, but only perhaps, Marjorie was glad that Mr. Lyle had suggested that they take Duncan into partnership. Certainly she could never have suggested it herself.

"Suppose we tell him," she said. Of course she could not say anything else.

"Good," said Mr. Lyle. "He 's on his piazza, reading."

They waved to him and he joined them and they walked to the Thurston steps.

"I suppose you 'll feel that you teased me into it, but Mrs. Thurston and I have been scouting for the ghost," Mr. Lyle said.

"At last something is going to happen in Rose Hill!" Duncan cried. "Did you find him — or her, or it?"

"We called on Mrs. Brown and had tea and never said a word about being detectives," said Marjorie. "I 'm an assistant detective. The robbery was mentioned only casually."

"Yes," said Mr. Lyle, "that 's exactly what we did. Mrs. Brown and Georgiana were there; we saw Henry Briggs, the choreman, trimming the drive; Thomas, the chauffeur, brought Mrs. Brown the afternoon mail and a package from the store; Sarah, a maid, brought the tea and things to eat, and another maid, rather elderly and name unknown, cut flowers from a bed near the piazza, presumably for the house."

"Her name is Katie," Marjorie added.

"And not a sign of the ghost?" Duncan asked.

"In daylight? Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Lyle.

"And Mrs. Brown makes a poor thief. She won't do for a criminal, will she?" Duncan said.

Mr. Lyle shook his head slowly. "Appearances are often deceitful — a sage remark, you will admit. I mean that to the untrained eye superficial characteristics are often misleading; some of the greatest criminals the world has ever known have had all the outward appearance of saints. They have been most clever actors, their faces have been full to overflowing with honesty,

purity, and simplicity; all of which was very useful in their business. It has been especially so among first-class criminal women. A woman's face ordinarily shows much more of her real character than a man's face does of his, her expression indicates much more accurately as a rule what is on her mind. When she can make her face a mask, and appear to be an innocent woman, she is, accordingly, doubly dangerous. On the other hand, to accept hospitality at a lady's hands, as Mrs. Thurston and I have done to-day, and then suspect her of a felony would hardly be polite, would it?"

And that was the end of Mr. Lyle's account of what he had seen, and in truth he had seen nothing more.

Nevertheless Mr. Lyle on his way home sent a telegram to Inspector Gibb, chief of the Detective Bureau of Alden, and the telegram read:

Wire me Rose Hill Rhode Island record Walter Kerrigan past thirteen months and present whereabouts if known.

The answer came that night:

Shot Frank Miller New York July seventh nineteen eighteen arrested July ninth sentenced September tenth for life Sing Sing."

Mr. Lyle tore the telegram to bits and went

back to his book, which happened to be "Erewhon Revisited," by Samuel Butler, a book which he had picked up casually and was reading intently, with mixed emotions.

Not very long after Mr. Lyle and his assistant left the Browns' Mr. Brown returned from his afternoon golf.

"Well, my dear, have you had a pleasant afternoon?" said Mr. Brown, greeting his spouse.

"I 've had a most remarkable man here," she said. "Marjorie Thurston brought him and his name is Lyle."

"Samuel Lyle?" asked Mr. Brown.

"I 'm sure I don't know."

"Homely as a hedge fence, big as a house, clothes don't fit him, hands and feet like a setter pup's?"

"Exactly."

"H-m-m," muttered Mr. Brown. "You say Mrs. Thurston brought him?"

"She did. Do you know him?"

"I know who he is. He 's the [illegible]ost criminologist, probably the leading [illegible]lawyer, in America."

"Why on earth did he come [illegible]ho sent him?" exclaimed Mrs. Brown

"I 'm sure I don't know. I should think no one sent him if he came with Marjorie Thurston. I imagine that even criminal lawyers take vacations and make calls."

"Naturally, and the robbery was hardly mentioned. I suppose he knew nothing about it."

"Mrs. Thurston has undoubtedly told him about it."

"I suppose she has."

"Let 's ask him to dinner," said Mr. Brown. The lure of Samuel Lyle was strong upon him.

There was more futile speculation regarding Mr. Lyle then and at dinner that night, which led nowhere, but it was certain that Mr. Lyle would not be able to do much investigating without its being known to the Browns.

CHAPTER V

TWO hours before Mr. Lyle tore up the telegram which he had received from Inspector Gibb, Duncan sat down on the topmost Thurston step and leaned back against the post of the railing. Marjorie was on the other end of the step.

"Let's walk to the rocks," Duncan said.

"It's very comfortable here."

"True; but it won't be, for me, as soon as some sociably inclined individual drops in to gossip."

Marjorie knew his purpose perfectly well and she did not know what to do or say. Must she fight her battle with Duncan to the end or could she evade it completely? She could, for instance, plead the coolness of the evening and go indoors where her mother was, or simply get up and go in, with a word to him to follow her, and if she did so he could not speak to her of his love; but would not that and other actions like it simply postpone the inevitable? Perhaps, but there was only a month left before she would be back in her New England city and Duncan would be back in Alden, and would not that be the end?

Somehow she knew that it would not be the end; she knew that the four hundred miles that would lie between them would be no barrier. He would come to her again and again and again, until their problem was solved for ever and ever, one way or the other.

She rose, slowly, as though she were very tired, and went down the steps. Duncan saw her face in the twilight and knew that she was as firm in her determination as she had ever been and that she was going with him because it would give her the opportunity to make him understand beyond all doubt that the order of her life could never change.

On the way she spoke of Mr. Lyle. "He did n't do a bit of sleuthing at Mrs. Brown's this afternoon. He just sat round and talked like an ordinary, every-day individual."

"Perhaps, but the ways of Sammy Lyle are beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. He sits perfectly still, sometimes almost as though he were asleep, and all the time he 's seeing things and hearing things that you and I would never notice, and everything he sees means something to him. He can tell things by watching a man or woman — their eyes, their mouths, what they do with their hands and feet — that you and I could

never guess at. How he does it I don't know. I supect he does n't know himself. I suppose that it 's a gift, a science born in him. I don't say that he did a thing this afternoon, but you never can tell."

"Do you really think he 'll find out anything about it?"

"You know as well as I; but he seldom starts anything that he does n't finish."

That subject brought them to the rocks and there it lapsed. Marjorie sat facing the sea and Duncan sat close to her, resting on an arm so close behind her that if she had leaned a little backward she must have touched it. There swept over him a sense of great responsibility, and he wondered just what that responsibility was. Duncan had seen far more of the world than she could possibly have seen, he was older than she; he had lived in the world as she had never lived; he had been through the great war. She was a child, a little girl who had gone to school and to college, and from college straight to her youthful romance, a little girl who had been cared for tenderly all her life, and upon whom, finally, fate had played a horrible trick.

To Duncan, sitting close to her on the rocks, she was the sweetest, loveliest woman in the

world, one whom he must treat tenderly. A ruthless wooing and selfish deeds could not help his cause and might hurt her terribly. She had, deep within her, a great sorrow, but it would be wrong, unnatural, inhuman, if that sorrow were to remain there long; and selfish as his purpose was, perhaps he believed that it was not only his right but his duty to remove it if he could. He knew that the right to love, the right of happiness had not been taken from her by the trick fate had played upon her.

And so, close to her, he considered what he might do to destroy the barrier between them. What use could words be, what would it avail him to attempt a cold-blooded analysis of her position? If love was to come to her it must come as loves comes to all good women; and if it came it would overwhelm her, making all else insignificant; and, coming, it would obliterate the memory of the years that were past, it would annihilate her resolution to cling to her dreams, it would conquer her and trample the barrier underfoot. And if fate ordained that she should love again, love him, how impotent her struggle against love would be! Could he bring love to her by logic or by dwelling on the practical, material point of view?

He thought that he could not and he sat beside her in silence, content that she was there close to him, content with the perfume of her, content with the wisps of her hair that the wind blew against his cheek.

Marjorie did not understand his silence; for she had expected words, futile words, from him which would give her her chance to prove that never so long as she lived could she love again, that never could she give up, for another love, the love that had been hers. The silence weighed heavily upon her; she could feel the warmth of his body close to hers; she wanted to move away from him and could not. Many and many a time she had wanted to evade him, not to see him again, but it had seemed to her that to do that would show her own lack of faith in herself. And besides it was impossible for her to act in that manner toward a man of Duncan's sort; it would have been bad-mannered, unwarranted, childish.

She welcomed the flash of a search-light on a ship in Oldport Harbor; she followed its beam across the sky, pointing to it and speaking of it; she saw signals flashed in Morse code from one war-ship to another; she followed, with a word to Duncan, automobiles on the other side of the

bay, their paths traced by the gleam of their headlights; she counted the flashes, eight of them in quick succession, from the lighthouse on the Point, and when the light was gone she waited for it to come again. She heard the funereal tolling of the bell-buoy on Rose Reef, and she saw the red gleam of the channel light.

One by one the night boats came out of the north and one by one passed before her, silent in the night, till the side-wheelers came, sending the pulsing, throbbing moan of their paddles across the water. From one came the sound of music, carried on the dying breeze; green lights shone bright until they disappeared as the ships sped southward, leaving only masthead lights and deck lights to show that craft were there.

Finally the last boat was gone, the war-ships finished their chat, the search-light was hooded for the night, the lights in the windows of houses far away across the water went out one by one; the only sound came from the sleepy waves at her feet, kissing the rocks good night.

But the stars were bright in the heavens, the ocean's breath touched her cheeks, and close beside her was the silent man, waiting. The night had cast its spell over her and held her fast. An hour passed before she spoke.

"I 'm a little cold, Duncan."

He sprang to his feet and took her hand and helped her rise. He held her arm as they crossed the jagged rocks and he held her arm as they walked home, for the night was dark; there are no lights out of doors in Rose Hill and the path was hard to see. They reached her cottage, he released her arm, and she put her foot on the first step — and stopped — and turned to him.

"Please, Duncan, please don't try to make me love you."

"I do love you. Good night."

"Please, please, Duncan!"

"Good night. Sweet dreams."

He heard her breath catch in her throat, he saw her hand stretched out with its fingers far apart, her head go back and her face upward as though she were gazing straight to heaven. "It can never be," she said, and she turned and went slowly up the steps and into her cottage.

But he did not know that her pillow was wet with tears before she went to sleep; nor did he know what effect his silence during that long evening on the rocks had had upon her. Perhaps Marjorie herself did not know.

The morning after Marjorie and Mr. Lyle

called on Mrs. Brown, Mr. Brown, being a direct and matter-of-fact gentleman, spoke to Mr. Lyle, when by chance he met him on Rose Hill's only road.

"My name is Brown," he said. "You are Samuel Lyle, I believe."

"I am and I am very sorry that I missed you yesterday afternoon. Mrs. Bowers, your niece, has often spoken to me of you and Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Bowers is a most delightful woman."

"She is indeed," Mr. Brown admitted, and that topic got them safely to the foot of the hill. There Mr. Brown jumped head first into the important subject:

"I suppose you 've heard about the remarkable recovery of Mrs. Brown's jewelry, the stuff that was stolen last summer?"

"Yes, indeed. Mrs. Thurston and Duncan Webb told me the whole story, quite inaccurately undoubtedly, so far as the theft itself was concerned."

"Hardly, I should say. Every fact is public property and it is all most mysterious; the circumstances are most curious."

"I suppose you have no theory as to how the thing was done?"

"None whatever, not an idea in the world!

Every bit of evidence points to the fact that no one entered from outside the house, and yet it is impossible that any one in the house should have done it."

"Why?" asked Mr. Lyle.

"Because Mrs. Brown, my daughter Georgiana and I were alone there, except for the four women-servants, who have been with us for years. Besides, how could they have entered the room? The hall door was locked and stayed locked, and why should they or any one else steal a lot of jewelry and put it under the pier and never go near it again? I know you, sir, by reputation and if you could clear up this business you would confer a great favor on the family and our servants; we should be under tremendous obligations. It 's getting on our nerves, especially since the stuff was found under the pier. We 're all getting to suspect one another, and I admit my own curiosity is very great."

Mr. Lyle smiled. "The two young people and I have already entered a partnership for the search of adventure, to amuse ourselves. We were n't going to say anything about it. It was to be along the lines Poe followed in the story of *Marie Roget,* an analysis of the reported facts."

"Do it any way you like, so long as you

do it — and — and —" Mr. Brown thought of terms and hesitated. "Would you undertake the case professionally, so to speak?"

"We 'll make it pure adventure — for the three of us, Mrs. Thurston and Webb and me, if you don't mind."

"As you wish, of course," said Mr. Brown. "Mrs. Brown would like you to dine with us to-night and play a rubber of auction if you care for cards."

"I shall be delighted," said Mr. Lyle, "and if you say so, I 'll come a little early and glance at the scene of the crime."

"Do by all means," said Mr. Brown.

Mr. Lyle reached the Browns' some time before the dinner hour and with the Brown family visited Mrs. Brown's bedroom, and then, from outdoors, looked at the windows and their position in relation to the ground and the piazza roof. Mr. Lyle asked but one question and his interest seemed very casual, which annoyed Georgiana. His one question was whether the two rooms were just as they had been on the night of the robbery, that is, was the position of the furniture the same and were the locks and catches those which had been in place a year before. Mr. Lyle

was assured that not a thing had been changed.

When they were seated on the piazza, Georgiana, who had inherited much frankness, said: "Well, did Mother take them?"

Mr. Lyle shook his head. "I doubt it. Of course I can't be sure, but I doubt it. Does your mother walk in her sleep?"

"I do not," said Mrs. Brown. "It 's quite difficult enough when I 'm awake. I 'm not so young as I once was, though my daughter has no respect whatever for my gray hairs. I 'm very much ashamed of her."

Georgiana was in no way perturbed. "Neither had Mother ever shown any signs of being a kleptomaniac — before the robbery," she said. "But you never can tell," she added.

Mr. Lyle, enjoying Georgiana, asked her another question: "Has your father any strong feeling on the subject of woman's dress? Does he, for instance, or has he ever, looked upon feminine finery with scorn? Has he ever voiced any great dislike to jewelry or other form of decoration? Is he rabid on dress reform for women?"

"Good heavens, no!" exclaimed Georgiana. "He knows better than to interfere with things that don't concern him. Father is really very meek and docile."

"Yes, but you know what the Bible says about the meek. Meek people are sometimes very deep. Has it ever occurred to you that your father might have hated jewelry all his life? — that his dislike for it might have accumulated within him for years until it gained such power over him that he got up at night, in his sleep, and took your mother's things and hid them where no one could find them? What he was afraid to do when he was awake he may have done when he was unconscious of his act. Did n't Wilkie Collins write a story about some such phenomenon?"

Georgiana stared at her father. Mr. Brown laughed.

"I 'm afraid that won't hold water," he said. "I gave Mrs. Brown the necklace and most of the other things, and I was rather fond of them myself."

"And besides, how could Father open that creaky door without waking Mother?" asked Georgiana.

"That 's so," said Mr. Lyle, humbly. "I did n't think of that. We seem to come back to where we started, every time; don't we?"

"Just as all those detectives and insurance men did last year"

"Did they ever suspect you?" Mr. Lyle asked Georgiana.

"They suspected everybody," exclaimed Georgiana, "and never accomplished a thing except to make every one suspicious of every one else."

"Nevertheless, I presume your conscience is entirely clear?"

"I have no conscience," Georgiana said. "Consciences are out of date."

"I can imagine nothing more dangerous, nothing more likely to bring the whole structure of society and civilization crashing down into ruin than a woman without a conscience."

"Could one lone woman do all that?" said Georgiana, in mock horror.

"Perhaps I should have said 'if *women* were to lose their consciences.'"

"Women never have had consciences," said Georgiana. She expected Mr. Lyle to disagree with her.

"That is true," he said, "if you consider conscience another name for being good for the sake of goodness, of doing right for the sake of righteousness, and not being good and doing right because it pays or because of what people will say about you. Women, morally, are utilitarian; they are guided by their emotions, by the

exigency of the moment, by sentiment; they have little idea of right and wrong, none whatever of justice. Women have, by and large, a holy horror for law and order, they have no respect whatever for man-made statutes, and they have no regard whatsoever for man's ethical code."

"So you 're a woman-hater, are you?" demanded Georgiana.

"Quite the contrary. I have such a humble respect and reverence for the noblest work of God that I have never been able even to suggest to one of them that I was worthy of her. I am content to worship from afar."

"You 're talking nonsense!" said Georgiana.

"Georgiana!" Mrs. Brown seemed shocked.

"Your daughter is quite right," said Mr. Lyle. "Man has never been able to chart the hidden reefs of one small bay of the feminine sea. How can he hope, or be expected, to do so over the whole world's waters? Will you excuse me a moment? I have, I think, left my handkerchief in my overcoat."

The evening was cool and Mr. Lyle had worn a light overcoat and he had left it in the hall. He stepped quickly to the doorway, forestalling Mr. Brown, who was about to go for it. His coat was on a bench close to the door; it was of course

bright daylight, and even if it had not been he needed no light by which to explore the pockets of that well-known garment. Yet Mr. Lyle picked up the coat and stepped into a room to the right, beyond which lay the dining-room. Mr. Lyle walked noiselessly across the room, dropping his coat on a chair, and stood in the doorway. Katie, a waitress, who on another day had picked flowers for the table close to the piazza on which Mr. Lyle sat, was arranging plates on a serving-table. Her back was toward Mr. Lyle and she did not see him.

In a moment she turned and went toward the table, carrying a water pitcher; she filled one glass and then she saw Mr. Lyle with his eyes fixed on hers. Katie stood stock still, staring at Mr. Lyle as though he were a ghost; her face went white, her knees trembled beneath her. Never before in her life had she seen such a man, such a homely man; never had she seen such eyes, eyes that looked clear through you and saw everything that was inside you, even to what you were thinking.

Katie, trembling, put the heavy water pitcher on the table, looking downward as she did so, and in that moment's respite from Mr. Lyle's eyes she gained control over herself. She looked

up again at Mr. Lyle and smiled and there was a sort of determined, almost ferocious courage in her expression. Mr. Lyle saw, then, all that he wanted to see.

"May I have a glass of water?" he said. Katie gave it to him. He drank it, thanked her, and walked away. He picked up his coat, dropped it on the bench in the hall without looking for his handkerchief, and rejoined the others on the piazza.

Katie, in the dining-room, stared after him. "Gawd, what a man!" she muttered and her hand trembled so that she could hardly fill the tumblers.

After dinner Georgiana held very poor cards at auction, and ended by insisting that card-playing was a mighty poor way of investigating a robbery.

"You seem unduly nervous," Mr. Lyle said. "Does that mean that you have something on your conscience?"

"I thought you said women did n't have consciences," snapped Georgiana. "Anyway, we agreed that they have n't."

"That 's so — they have n't; have they? I 'd forgotten all about that. Suppose we say 'some-

thing on your mind,' then. You have a mind, surely."

"I 'm not at all sure of that," interrupted Mrs. Brown. "If she has it 's a very queer one."

"Have you ever noticed how, in detective stories, the one person who appears innocent throughout the tale always turns up guilty in the last chapter?" Mr. Lyle asked. "It occurs to me that suspicion has pointed to every one except Miss Brown, who, I can't help feeling, has something on her mind. She shows all the signs that ordinarily appear in the guilty."

"I *have* something on my mind," said Georgiana, positively. "What affectionate daughter would n't have, in the circumstances? The constant fear of seeing Mother spend the rest of her life in prison for defrauding an insurance company is not pleasant, to say the least. Those things always reflect on the children."

Mrs. Brown looked at her daughter with all the severity she could assume.

"Perhaps the insurance company won't prosecute," suggested Mr. Lyle.

"Suppose it does n't: the truth is bound to get out," said Georgiana; "and then where will the family reputation be?"

"But how can the insurance company prove

anything?" asked Mr. Lyle. "Suppose Mrs. Brown did take her own jewels and, asleep or awake, go out into the night, hide them under the pier, and return without a soul seeing her. It rained hard all night, she must have gone through wet grass, but did any one find any wet garments the next morning, or wet or muddy shoes? I understand not."

"What was to prevent Mother from taking the jewels, even before she went to bed, and putting them into a pocket of a coat or some place like that and then hiding them under the pier the next day or the next week?"

"Has that possibility just occurred to you?" asked Mr. Lyle, "or is it an old theory?"

"It 's a brand-new idea so far as I am concerned," said Georgiana.

"Then I 'm ashamed of you. I doubt if you have a mind at all. And, furthermore, I presume it has never occurred to you that it is entirely within the realm of possibilities that your mother did not lock her bedroom door and that she did not put the jewels in the bureau drawer and lock it and put the key behind the picture, but, that, having done those things many times before, she afterward took it for granted she had done them that night. Habit is sometimes so

strong that the mind often takes it for granted that habitual acts have been performed, whereas they have not been performed at all. Human testimony, however honestly given, is often very thin ice to skate on."

"Good heavens!" muttered Mrs. Brown.

"Set your mind completely at rest," Mr. Lyle said. "Whatever you did, or whatever you thought you did makes no difference. There can be no question that you went to your room that night wearing some of the jewels that were taken, the necklace for instance, and that you did not leave your room before you went to sleep, nor did Mr. Brown. Thereafter, somebody, before morning, took the jewels and that night, or later, hid them under the pier and certainly never made any effort to obtain them again. That's the interesting and important thing. If a thief stole them he did it for their money value; why should he go off and leave them? If they were taken for some other reason than their money value, what could that reason have been, and who could have had any such fool incentive to commit a crime? On the face of it the whole thing is utterly impossible, the mind cannot conceive of its happening at all."

"But it did happen," cried Georgiana.

"Exactly; and we must look to supernatural, not human agencies for an explanation."

Georgiana sniffed. "Fairy tales," she said contemptuously.

"I must go along. It is very late, for Rose Hill," Mr. Lyle said.

"You 're just teasing us," said Georgiana. "I suppose you know already who did it."

"I do," said Mr. Lyle, solemnly.

"You do!" Georgiana and Mrs. Brown cried in amazement.

Mr. Lyle nodded. "Yes. I 've known all along that it must have been either Mrs. Brown or a ghost and I 'm very sure now that it was n't Mrs. Brown."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Georgiana. "It must have been Mother! It could n't have been any one else."

"How are you going to prove it?" asked Mr. Lyle. "You are no more warranted in accusing Mrs. Brown than you are in accusing me. Negative evidence is a treacherous device. To say, 'Mother did it because nobody else could have done it,' is to assume a complete knowledge of the supernatural as well as the natural, a knowledge so comprehensive, so deep and broad that no young woman, however brilliant, could pos-

sess it. The mind of even the most charming and talented of our new class of intellectual woman is not capable of conceiving *all* the possibilities of even so simple a case as this!"

"H-m-m," muttered Mrs. Brown. "I think now I may be left in peace for a while."

Mr. Lyle laughed, Georgiana made a face, and Mr. Lyle departed.

CHAPTER VI

ON his way home Mr. Lyle sent another telegram to Inspector Gibb and on the morning of the second day following the answer arrived in the person of Ferdinand Schwartz, sharp of feature, sharp of eye, long of arm, short of leg, large of head and small of foot, and brilliant as to clothes. Mr. Schwartz had every appearance of being an extremely agile and powerful man, despite his small height, and extremely intelligent, although possibly along narrow lines. On Rose Hill's only road he stopped one of Rose Hill's most proper old ladies and said to her, most respectfully:

"Could you tell me, ma'am, where t'ell is Sim's cottage?" The lady pointed an outraged finger, the man touched his cap, said "T'anks," and went in the direction indicated. He found Mr. Lyle waiting for him.

"'Mornin,' sir, fine morning'," said Mr. Schwartz.

Mr. Lyle said that it was an unusually fine morning.

"Quiet place," suggested Mr. Schwartz, referring to Rose Hill.

"Very indeed," said Mr. Lyle. "I hope you were n't busy when you got my message, that you were not inconvenienced."

"Never busy, sir, never when you have something doin'."

"Bring your baggage with you?"

"Complete, sir, 's down at the inn."

"Good. You 're a gentleman — white flannels and that sort of thing. You 'll have to travel a little, New York to-night, back here to-morrow night."

"Anything good?" asked Ferdinand.

Mr. Lyle shook his head. "A year-old robbery," he said. Mr. Schwartz seemed satisfied; curiosity was not one of his weaknesses. He received his instructions without comment and followed them implicitly. That afternoon he examined very carefully the exterior of the Brown cottage; that evening he took the ferry to Oldport and from there he took the boat to New York. He returned by train and reported to Mr. Lyle. He then went to Providence, where he spent a day or two; and returning, seemed to find little to do except enjoy the soothing air of Rose Hill.

While Mr. Schwartz was examining the exterior of the Brown cottage, Mr. Lyle was chatting inside the cottage with Mr. Brown and during the course of the conversation he asked Mr. Brown if he had a revolver. Mr. Brown had, and Mr. Lyle asked if he might borrow it. Mr. Lyle might, though Mr. Brown did not like in the least the idea of Mr. Lyle's requiring a revolver for his protection and insisted that, if the revolver were required in connection with Mr. Lyle's investigation of the robbery, the investigation should cease at once. Mr. Lyle gave his solemn word that his safety was in no danger whatsoever, but refused to say anything as to the purpose to which the revolver was to be put. Mr. Brown went for his revolver and Mr. Lyle examined it critically.

"Is this the best gun you have?" he asked.

Mr. Brown rather fancied his shiny pistol: it was an old friend. "It is," he said. "What 's the matter with it?"

"I imagine it was a very fine weapon in its day, but automatics are used by the best families almost exclusively nowadays. Is this the only one you have?"

"Yes, that 's the only one."

"Then I 'm afraid it will have to do," said Mr.

Lyle. "I'll return it promptly. And by the way, I understand that things in the rooms upstairs, in yours and Mrs. Brown's rooms, are very much as they were when you were robbed?"

"Exactly, so far as I know, exactly."

"Might I look at them again? I had only a glance before."

Mr. Lyle certainly might look at them, and did. He tried the door that had stuck and still stuck and made a fine noise when it was opened or shut, which was very seldom; he tried the locks of the hall doors, he examined the shutters, going so far as to place a pocket rule against them, noting the space between the leaves of the shutters and the distance of the sill below the lowest opening; he leaned out the window and looked up and down and all about; he studied the bureau drawer that contained the jewel-box, measured the thickness of the wood, and looked at the key. Mr. Brown showed him the nail on which the key had hung at the time of the robbery.

"Of course you don't keep it there any more?" he said. Mr. Brown was about to tell Mr. Lyle where Mrs. Brown kept it, but Mr. Lyle interrupted him. "No, don't tell me where you keep it. I don't want to know, it should be

a family secret." Then he added: "I 've seen all that I wish to see here, thank you."

Mr. Brown knew that it was undoubtedly the correct thing for him to keep quiet, and wait for Mr. Lyle to make statements in his own good time, but Mr. Brown's curiosity was too much for him.

"Any ideas?" he asked.

Mr. Lyle nodded slowly. "Between you and me, for the time being?" he asked. Mr. Brown nodded. "Ghosts, sure as you 're alive," said Mr. Lyle.

"All right," Mr. Brown said. "I 'll wait, but — but don't keep me in the dark too long — if anything pops up."

Mr. Lyle laughed. "I 'll tell you the minute anything pops up, you may depend on that. Nothing has popped up but a lot of wild guesses, so far; perhaps nothing will. We 'd better stick to the ghost for a while yet; it 's safer."

Mr. Lyle went back to his cottage and spent an hour with Mr. Schwartz before dinner. Immediately after dinner Mr. Schwartz left for New York.

The next morning, the day Ferdinand

Schwartz spent in New York, Mr. Lyle took a walk alone, a walk that had all the appearance of a casual stroll, but which nevertheless took him by the Browns' garage, where Thomas, the Browns' chauffeur, was sitting in a chair, reading a paper. Mr. Lyle nodded to Thomas, and seemed to be on the point of passing on, when he stopped and spoke to him.

"Do you like driving automobiles as much as driving horses?" he asked. "I am told that you were Mr. Brown's coachman before automobiles put horses out of business."

"Yes, sir, I was. I've been with Mr. Brown since I was twenty-nine; that's thirty-five years now."

"And you still like horses?" Mr. Lyle repeated.

"In a way I do, sir, but I would n't be saying cars is n't better, everything considered. Do you drive a car yourself, sir?"

"On rare occasions; I am always willing to be driven. I rather hoped you had a soft spot in your heart for horses, Thomas. I have. I used to drive and ride a great deal, but I suppose that we must all follow the customs of the times. I used to spend my vacations on horseback, now I

spend them walking about — as I am now, in Rose Hill." Mr. Lyle smiled as though that were a curious state of affairs.

"Ye 'll be here the rest of the summer?" Thomas asked.

"Only during August, and perhaps a week into September, and then I 'll go back to Alden and be a lawyer again."

"You 're a lawyer then, sir? I 'd been told you were a detective, an especially good one, out of the ordinary, so to speak, sir."

Mr. Lyle laughed. "I suppose you suspect every one who comes about here of being a detective until you are sure he is n't, after the dose you had of them last summer?"

"Well, I would not go as far as that, sir, but it 's not a thing to be forgot in a hurry, havin' them about askin' questions, and most o' them fool questions, too, and turning up unexpected at all times o' day and night."

"Yes, I quite understand. It was a very curious case, was n't it? What 's your idea of it, Thomas?"

"Faith, I have no idea. I had a dozen of 'em, one after the other, at the time and none of 'em any good, from Mrs. Brown walkin' in her sleep to evil spirits makin' way with 'em."

"Ghosts, you mean?"

"Ghosts it is, sir, till Mr. Webb found everything under the pier walk, where no ghost in his right mind would leave 'em."

"Yes, all the theories seem to have gone up in smoke sooner or later. It 's all most mysterious."

"Are you doin' anything about it, sir?" Thomas's voice changed ever 'so little when he asked that question.

"No, I 'm not really doing anything at all, but I admit my curiosity is aroused and just to amuse myself I 've been trying to think of some way it might have happened. I have n't gotten very far, I admit. I thought you might have a suspicion of some sort about it." Mr. Lyle seemed to be looking off into space dreamily. "Are you married, Thomas?" he asked.

"Not me, sir. What made you ask that, sir?"

"Curiosity, nothing else. I did n't see any signs of a family about, though there seems to be room for one. I 'm an old bachelor myself; it 's a bond of sympathy between us." Mr. Lyle relighted his cigar, holding it carefully over the match. He dropped the burnt match on the gravel and put his foot on it; then he smoked for a moment, his eyes resting on Thomas. Finally

he said: "Thomas, have you ever had any suspicion, any fear, about the robbery which you have never told Mr. or Mrs. Brown or the police?"

A most curious expression came on Thomas's face. His lips were pressed close together. There was a trace of nervousness in his eyes.

"Me, sir?" he said. "How would I know anything about it, except what I told, which was nothing?"

"You were very sure, then, that your suspicion was entirely groundless?"

Again Thomas's expression changed quickly: the question, which was more a statement than a question, left him confused and a little frightened. He knew that Mr. Lyle's eyes were on him, but he had no conception of how clearly Mr. Lyle was reading his emotions. Mr. Lyle did not wait for Thomas's answer, but spoke to him again:

"You have been with Mr. Brown over thirty-five years, you say, Thomas?"

"Yes, sir." Thomas's voice was tremulous.

"And in all that time you have lived honorably and happily? — you've done your work well, served your master faithfully, and have been well treated?"

"Yes, sir, that 's so, sir."

"And you hope to go on in the same way, as long as you are able to work, and you know that you will be taken care of in your old age?"

Thomas, wide-eyed, muttered, "Y-y-yes, s-s-sir, I hope so, sir."

"And do you think that I would do anything to change that, anything to harm you? Are you not sure that I would do everything that I can do to help you, to make you happier than you are now?"

Duncan had told Marjorie of the great heart of Samuel Lyle, of his kindness and of his generosity to his fellow-man. Marjorie herself had, in a few short days, been won by the wonderful sweetness of his voice, by the gentleness of his eyes. Thomas, standing before him, felt sweeping over him a great faith in the enormous, homely man, whom he hardly knew at all.

"I believe you, sir," he said.

"Then tell me what you know, tell me what has been torturing you this past year — and for years before that. I promise you that no one shall ever know, from me. Was he here when the Brown house was entered and robbed?"

Thomas stared in amazement at Mr. Lyle.

"You know — you know about that, sir?" he muttered.

Mr. Lyle shook his head. "I know nothing, absolutely nothing. I want you to tell me. Was he here?"

"No, he was not here. It happened on a Tuesday night and he was here on Saturday before and Saturday night, and he went away on Sunday, on the afternoon train from the junction. I saw him go, and he did not come back; he 's not come back since that day, and I 've not heard a word from him."

"You know him well, of course?"

"Too well, too well indeed, sir."

"What is his name?"

"Raymond Smith."

"I see. And you don't know what has happened to him since that day, the day he went away?"

"Not a word have I heard of him, sir."

"I am not surprised," Mr. Lyle said. "You won't say anything about this to any one, will you, Thomas? — that is, about your having told me?"

"I will not, sir. I 'll say nothing to a soul."

"You have never said a word of it to a soul, have you?"

Thomas looked intently at Mr. Lyle and hesitated. He was not making up his mind whether he should tell the truth but whether he should speak at all.

Thomas's answer was given for him. "To no one but one other person, whom you know you can trust?" Mr. Lyle said.

"Yes, sir, that 's so, sir," Thomas said.

"I quite understand," Mr. Lyle said. "And now, so far as you are concerned, our talk is as though it had never taken place. Good-by."

"Good-by, sir.

Mr. Lyle held out his hand and Thomas took it, and there were tears in Thomas's eyes.

Mr. Lyle walked away and as he walked he thought how very severe punishments may be even when the courts know nothing about them.

Thomas stood gazing after him, and as Mr. Lyle disappeared a smile came on Thomas's lips. He knew nothing of Samuel Lyle except what he had seen with his own eyes, and what he had heard Mr. Lyle say that afternoon, and yet he knew that at last he had found a friend, one whom he could trust and one who would help him, and he had wanted such a friend for many a long year.

Hardly was Mr. Lyle gone when Katie, the waitress, walking fast, came from the house and across the lawn toward Thomas.

"What 's he been sayin' to you?" she cried. Her face bore much the same expression as that which Mr. Lyle had seen when he surprised her in the dining-room.

"He asked me did I like horses or automobiles best," Thomas answered.

"Perhaps he did, but what else?"

"Nothin' of importance."

"That ain't so. Oh, Tom, tell me, tell me! I seen him here the other night and I 'm afraid of him. He 's the devil of a man."

"He 's nothing of the sort. He 's square and he 'll not hurt you. Kape your mouth shut, Katie, and ye 'll have nothin' to fear."

"Does he know about 'im?"

"He does."

"How did he find out? Ye did n't tell 'im, Tom?"

"I did not. He knew it already."

"Then how did he know?"

"God knows how he knew — I did n't ask 'im — but he 'd find out anything he wanted to, quick enough."

"Don't I know that? I thought I 'd die when

he was lookin' at me. He come to the dinin'-room for a glass o' water and whin I see him standin' be the dure an' sayin' nothin' I thought I 'd scream, I was that afeared of 'im."

"Ye have nothin' to be afraid of; he promised me that."

"Oh, Tom! are you sure o' that?"

"Certainly I 'm sure of it. He 'd not lie to me or to any one else."

"Praise Gawd if it 's so."

"Now, don't worry, Katie. Go on as ye 've been goin' and say nothin' and it 'll come out all right in the end."

Katie wiped the tears from her cheeks with the back of her hand and then from her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Give me yer handkerchief, Tom," she said finally.

Tom gave her a handkerchief that was never intended for feminine use and with it she restored her face to some semblance of order.

"Ye 'll tell me if anything happens, Tom?"

"Certainly I will."

Katie seemed satisfied and walked slowly toward the house. On the way she stopped and picked a few flowers from a bed. Thomas lighted his pipe, picked up his paper, sat down

in his chair, and began to read, but very soon the paper fell to his knees and remained there. Thomas was staring far into the distance, and seeing nothing that was there to be seen.

CHAPTER VII

DUNCAN and Marjorie had a dim suspicion that something was going on in the detective business without their knowing it, and Marjorie thought they ought to do something about it. Duncan shook his head.

"We 're not real sleuths, you know," he said, "and we can trust old Sammy. When the time comes, if it ever does, he 'll see that we don't miss the excitement; and if nothing does happen he 'll get us off in a corner and tell us the reasons why nothing happened and explain his theories and admit that it 's too late to prove them or something like that. He is n't a detective, really; he 's a lawyer; and it 's a long time since the thing happened."

"It seems to me you 're losing faith in your hero," Marjorie suggested.

"You know better than that. Wait and see what happens; he 'll tell us if anything happens, he 'll let us know when he wants us to help."

"He had the queerest-looking man here yester-

day," Marjorie said, as though Mr. Lyle should have told them something about that.

"Mr. Ferdinand Schwartz, you mean. I met him; Mr. Lyle introduced us. He has n't anything to do with the Brown business, has he?"

"I don't know, he did n't say a word to me about it, but he 's certainly not a personal friend of Mr. Lyle's, he could n't be."

"No, I suppose not. Let 's ask him who Mr. Schwartz is. If we 're in partnership we have the right to know."

They were on their way to the boat landing; Mr. Lyle had suggested that he would like to take a sail and he was waiting for them. They were well out in the bay before Duncan spoke of Mr. Lyle's friend.

"Where 's Mr. Schwartz to-day?" he asked.

"Gone away." Mr. Lyle waved his hand in a southerly direction.

"For good?" asked Marjorie.

"Oh, my, no! He 'll come back some day, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps the day after — all depends."

"He 's a friend of yours, is n't he?" Marjorie asked.

"Friend! — friend of mine! Now, really —

do you think that I make a practice of associating with my enemies?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean," Marjorie exclaimed. "Is he a gentleman, a personal friend of yours, or is he just an acquaintance or a business friend?"

"He 's an iconoclast," said Mr. Lyle.

"An iconoclast! What 's that? I used to know, but I 've forgotten."

"An iconoclast is a gentleman or, I suppose, a lady, who exposes or smashes impositions or shams into smithereens. He or she is also one who busts up images or idols, but Mr. Schwartz is n't that kind."

"Is he on a vacation or is he iconoclizing round here?" Duncan asked.

"He never goes on a vacation; a vacation would bore him to death, actually kill him. He has a curious history. He learned to be an iconoclast by practising on himself, successfully; that is, he smashed the original portrait of himself. That 's where the word comes from; 'icon' means a portrait or image. A long time ago Mr. Schwartz did n't like his own image and smashed it into a thousand pieces, and you caught a glimpse of the result, the remade man. And speaking of remade images, or

broken images and iconoclasts, I saw something in the paper this morning that will interest you, I believe. I cut it out and used it as a book-mark."

Mr. Lyle took a book from his pocket and found the clipping. "Thirty years ago, when I was first practising law in Alden, a most terrible murder was committed in Comstock, which is a mill town about fifteen miles northwest of the city. A man named Yates lived there; he was about thirty and had a wife and two children. He owned his house and had a good, steady job; his wife was a good woman and, so far as any one knew, his home life was very happy. Yates was an intelligent, sober, hard-working man, and to all appearances loved his wife greatly.

"He came home one night and the neighbors saw him with his family; they put out the lights and went to bed. The next day the neighbors saw no signs of the family about the house and, as chance would have it, nobody thought much about it; nobody called; the butcher and the baker and the candlestick-maker found nobody at home and went their ways. The next morning, however, when the milk had n't been taken off the doorstep and no one saw any one about the house and Yates's absence at the mill was known, an

investigation was started. Mrs. Yates and the two children were found in their beds, brutally murdered with a hatchet. There was no trace of Yates; he had disappeared, nor could he be found. Every trick known to the police was tried, every effort made to locate him; you know how thorough a search of that sort can be, and it was kept up for years, but it was as though Yates had disappeared off the face of the earth. Nor could any motive for the crime be discovered; his home life was serene, there was no other woman involved; neither had there been any evidence of insanity in Yates, or even of a violent temper. The whole thing was inexplicable.

"Now, according to this paper, Yates, calling himself White, has been found and arrested in the far West. He is married and has five children; he is prosperous, a prominent member of the community in which he lives, a model citizen with a host of friends. He admits his identity and the crime, but professes not to know why he did it; the paper is a bit indefinite on that part of it. Of course, under the law he is guilty of murder, the penalty is death, probably the crime can be proved against him, even at this late date. My part of the story is accurate; if the newspaper has the present facts right it makes a

most unusual and interesting case, does n't it?"

"Is n't something left out somewhere?" Duncan asked. "It 's not conceivable that a man should live honestly, sanely, honorably, and industriously for sixty years, that he should be an affectionate and good husband and father for thirty-five or forty of them, and go off the handle completely for five minutes, change from a saint to a horrible sinner and back again in a flash, and only do it once."

"It seems that he did do just that, nevertheless," said Mr. Lyle, "and I do not think it impossible. Of course this is an extreme case, so extreme that it is dangerous to jump at conclusions without more complete information about the man than we have now; it 's a case perhaps for alienists and other specialists, rather than for a judge and jury alone. It is interesting in itself. It is particularly interesting to us at the moment, and I 'll tell you why. There are individuals in this complex world of ours who are criminal to the core, yet who live to a ripe old age and die without ever committing a crime, who never steal even a postage-stamp. There is another phase of the phenomenon, one that is rather common, the case of the man who is apparently an ideal and able citizen for years and

years and then suddenly goes wrong; he is considered a fine, honorable business man, he is given positions of trust, he is a churchman and serves on innumerable committees out of pure philanthropy, and yet suddenly out of a clear sky and often for little or no reason he goes wrong, he embezzles, forges or takes trust funds unto himself for dishonest purposes, and loses them. He lives for fifty years on the plane of highest morality and then goes down with a crash.

"Often his methods are crude, stupid; he stands to gain little, he needs the money hardly at all, there is not one chance in a hundred of his escaping detection and he knows it, and yet despite all that he goes wrong. Of course he is caught and punished, unless he commits suicide, but the presumption remains that if he had remained at liberty, unsuspected, he would never have committed another crime."

"Don't those men usually begin in a small way, getting in deeper and deeper till finally the crash comes?" Duncan asked.

"Surely! There are many phases of the phenomenon," Mr. Lyle said, "but at the moment we are interested only in the one in which the man or woman is fundamentally a criminal, but is able

to resist the lure of crime either for ever or for a long time. Most people could n't commit a crime if they tried, some have to struggle constantly with might and main not to. There is another condition which sometimes exists, though it does not run headlong into legal criminality. You undoubtedly know men who have what appears to be a dual personality. I know one who is a fine example of it. He is what people call a captain of industry. In private life his code is beyond criticism, he almost leans backward, he is noted for his very fine sense of honor, his generosity, his sense of public duty, his philanthropy and his charming personality. In business he is the devil incarnate; he has no respect for the law but employs the ablest legal talent he can find to advise him how to evade the spirit of it if it will benefit him to do so; he is ruthless to his competitors, and merciless to his men; in his private life he is a saint, in his commercial life he is, morally at least, a sinner. However, he 's a digression. The point lies in the individual who has a strong but well-concealed criminal tendency."

Marjorie looked at Mr. Lyle questioningly. "What point?" she asked.

In truth the point was a long way back.

"I thought you were studying to be a detective," he said.

Marjorie got the idea. "Do you mean that somebody we know and who has always been supposed to be the soul of honor has suddenly turned thief?"

"Do you remember how, in school, you were given arithmetic problems to work out? You were supposed to find the answer yourself, as I recall it." Mr. Lyle smiled at Marjorie.

"Mrs. Brown, sure as fate," Duncan cried. "The ghost is innocent."

"Please don't be horrid!" exclaimed Marjorie, with all the dignity she could scrape up.

Duncan was repentant. "I hope it is n't Mrs. Brown," he said. "It would be a shame, and Georgiana would never stop gloating."

Marjorie ignored Duncan and spoke to Mr. Lyle. "You 're teasing me," she said. "I believe you know something and won't tell."

Mr. Lyle became very grave. "Can I trust you, absolutely? Of course I can. I *have* a suspicion. I 'm not sure, but I have a suspicion who did not do it."

"Who?" cried Marjorie.

"I don't believe it was Mrs. Brown, despite her daughter," said Mr. Lyle, laughing.

"Then who was it?" Marjorie demanded.

"Ghosts, as sure as you're alive," Mr. Lyle said, and he would not be serious, except to say that he had given her a clue that might lead somewhere and might lead nowhere, but which in either case it was her duty, as an apprentice in criminology, to follow.

Late in the afternoon, just as they landed, Duncan left them for a moment, and during that moment Mr. Lyle said to Marjorie:

"Would you like another clue? If you would, take this book and read the place I have marked by the clipping — not now, wait till you are alone, and say nothing to Duncan about it." He handed her the book just as Duncan rejoined them and they went up the hill together.

When Duncan and Marjorie were on their path, Duncan said, "An hour on the rocks tonight?"

Marjorie shook her head. "I can't," she said.

"Because —?"

"The maids are going to the movies and Mother's going out to play bridge. I've got to stay home."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to read Sammy Lyle's book?" Duncan had read the title.

"Perhaps."

"I would n't if I were you. It was n't written for Christians."

Marjorie tucked the book securely under her arm.

"Christianity has nothing to do with it," she said. "It 's a matter of business." She laughed as she went up her piazza steps. "It 's been a wonderful afternoon."

Duncan went to his cottage. Marjorie's curiosity as to Mr. Lyle's clue was very great, and she went indoors and up to her room quickly. She opened the book at the place marked and saw, marked with pencil, what at first she thought was poetry. She read it and did not understand it. She read it again, slowly, and then slowly her hands dropped to her side and her cheeks flushed. Her eyes were half closed, her vision blurred. The book slipped from her fingers to the floor; she covered her face with her hands, and then she fell, sobbing, on her bed.

What she had read was this, an epitaph:

I fall asleep in the full and certain hope
That my slumber shall not be broken;

And that though I be all-forgetting,
Yet shall I not be all-forgotten,
But continue that life in the thoughts and deeds
Of those I loved,
Into which, while the power to strive was yet vouchsafed me,
I fondly strove to enter.

She regained control of herself quickly, and sat up; then she jumped to her feet. She laughed. She knew that Duncan would come to her after dinner and spend the evening alone with her, but she laughed. And when she had bathed her face in cold water and gone downstairs, her mother saw nothing wrong, and did not suspect that her daughter had been crying.

Duncan came after dinner and sat down beside her on the piazza. He lighted his pipe and snapped the burned match over the railing.

"'T is a grand evening, Lady," he said. It was a grand evening and Marjorie said, "Lovely," and as she said it she wondered whether Duncan would give her a chance to talk, to tell him again that she had had her romance, that it would be her only romance and that she would be true to it for ever. Her husband had given his life for his country; it was her privilege, her duty, her desire, her glory, to give hers to his memory. To admit that she could ever love again would be

to mock the love that had been hers hardly more than a year ago.

Duncan had given her no such chance, and she had not made it for herself. He had been very kind to her, too kind. He had told her that he loved her, but she would have known it if he had not told her. It was plain to see in his eyes, it was in every word he said to her, it was in his fingers when they took her hand to help her from the boat or to hand her a golf-ball. She wondered if every one saw it as plainly as she did. And of course he had tried to make her love him, and one minute she had been proud that such a man should want her and the next she had been ashamed that she should seem to let him try to win her. She had wondered whether, if she had not been married, she would have loved him; and whether, if she had loved him, it would have been with the same love, the same sort of passion, that she had had for the boy who had been killed. She had blushed furiously when she thought of that; she believed that she was making odious comparisons. Her husband had been a boy. Duncan was a man.

But not once had she faltered. Her path lay clear before her and she would follow it, wherever it might lead. She had wondered where it

led — she was not quite sure — and she had wondered sometimes whether, beyond where she could see, it would be rough and steep and hard to travel. But wherever it led she must follow it. She knew that Samuel Lyle was against her. She knew that the unthinking world, the world that could not understand, would be against her, but she was not afraid. She had faith in herself, in her love, in her memories, confidence in her own strength.

She watched the match as it flew from Duncan's fingers, and kept her eyes on it as though to see if it were surely out and would not set fire to the grass in which it had fallen. As she watched she saw the blue smoke from his pipe drift slowly past her; she wanted him to speak and waited, but she was sure he would not. She was sure that he was looking at her, that if she turned toward him she would find his eyes fixed on hers, crying love and begging for her love.

She turned and his eyes were as she knew his eyes would be.

"Duncan, please. You must not. It is not fair — to me, or of me to let you. If we cannot be just friends, if we cannot agree that we shall never be more than that, I — I — I think you

understand that — that we cannot go on as we have been doing."

"I cannot help loving you. Do you mean that it is not fair for me to try to make you love me?"

"I mean that I cannot love you; I can never love any one again. Won't you believe me, and don't you see that when I spend hours with you every day, it seems as though I were not being honest, almost as though I were making sport of you when I know you love me, as though I wanted you to try to make me love you. I like you and I want to be nice to you, but it must not be under false pretenses. You must believe me."

Marjorie had no great pride in that statement; she knew that it was confused and futile, but, in her state of mind, it was the best that she could do. At least it meant that Duncan would talk and give her the chance she wanted.

Duncan did speak. "Suppose," he said, "you suddenly discovered that you loved me: what then? It is a thing which no human being can control; nature controls it."

"Why do you ask me to discuss something that can never happen?"

"But it can happen, and I am sure that you will love again, sometime."

"Never, Duncan."

"You cannot deny nature, your nature. You were made to be loved, and to love, and you know it. You are kind-hearted, generous, gentle; your heart has always governed your head, for all your fine intellect and your education. You are courageous, but you don't like to have to call on your courage. You are like the good, old-fashioned woman who believed that to be protected and taken care of was her right, that her duty and her destiny lay elsewhere than in facing the world alone.

"You are the sort of woman that is made to love and be loved, and you know what real love is. It is a practical thing, a thing which nature invented in a crude form, and which men and women have perfected. You know what human companionship is and how impossible it is for normal people to get along without it. Love — the close, unchangeable, everlasting companionship of one man and one woman — is the only thing worth while, really. Everything else is secondary to that.

"I 'm preaching, I know, talking platitudes, but I have been in love with you for only a month and yet in that month I have learned far more than I ever knew before. There is no use in my

trying to tell you why I want you. I want you because you are you; your love would be priceless. To have you, for my first duty to be to you, to have your respect, always, your love, to go through the world side by side with you, is the whole of life to me, and I know that it should be so. It must be so with you, too; if I am not the man, then some other man will come. You cannot go on as you are now, alone, you cannot face the world as you are; it is not right that you should attempt to do so, you, of all women in the world.

"Don't you like the physical side of love, your own home, in which you do your part of the world's work and the man does his? Don't you want some one near you who is all yours, some one to hold you in his arms and kiss you, to comfort you, whether you really need comforting or not? and don't you want a man to comfort?"

"Of course, all women who love want that; but they hardly want it without love," Marjorie said.

"Love is a practical thing: it's good for you, like fresh air and plain cooking. Romantic love, in the moonlight to the strains of soft music, is n't real love; real love comes long after that, and when it happens to run into the moonlight

somewhere the woman says, 'Do you remember the moon—?' that other time, and the man pinches her cheek and says she was awfully silly then, and she says he was just as silly as she was and the music begins and he says, 'Do you want to dance again?' and she says, 'Do you?' and he says, 'Let 's go home,' and she says, 'Let's,' and he puts his arm round her and they go home and go to sleep. That 's the kind of love for you and me.

"Love is life and life is in the future, always. The dead past buries its dead for youth whether we will have it so or not; it would be a sorry world indeed if it were not so."

Duncan waited for Marjorie to speak. It was nearly dark and he could see no more than the faintest outline of her, but he could see that her face was turned from him and he knew that her eyes were on the far-away lights of Oldport. He knew that he had spoken strongly, that perhaps his words had been cruel; but he knew, too, that he must not be weak himself, that he must not let her doubt the strength of his feeling or his own belief in his position. He waited for Marjorie to speak.

"But the life after this life?" she said; "the life in which we shall meet again those — those

whom we have loved in this world, and who have gone before?"

"I cannot answer that. The church sanctions second marriages; let the church explain it to you. I do not believe in heaven or a life hereafter as the church teaches it. My belief is that heaven is here on earth, that when we die we live only in the hearts of those we leave behind and in the good we may have done. Samuel Lyle believes as I do."

Samuel Lyle had given her that very day a book in which that belief was written, and yet she knew that he had said nothing to Duncan of his purpose or of having given her the book. It seemed to Marjorie as though the whole world were against her.

"Do you believe in God?" she asked. It was very hard for her to speak.

"I honor and respect the God of other men, far better men than I am. I do not understand; I wonder sometimes if God is not nature, and the desire and the power that nature has given man to do right, to live honorably and to love."

A sob came from the darkness, so low that it was hardly to be heard. "I am sorry," Duncan said, "if I have shocked you. If you care what my beliefs are it is better that you should

know them now than — than some other day."

"You have not shocked me. I understand how you can believe — as you do."

A silence fell between them, a long silence in which she tried to dull her senses, tried not to think, tried to evade the pressure that Duncan was exerting upon her. She longed for some one to whom she could go for comfort, some one who would bring back her courage, who believed as she believed; some one who could tell her how she might prevail against the fascination Duncan had for her, the awful fascination of the long silences when he was with her. There was no one but her mother, and she could not confess her weakness to her mother.

And he was there with her, then, alone, and silence was all about her, until suddenly she heard his voice, low and calm, but driving each word straight to her heart.

"Is it not true that at this very moment you need love?— that you need some one to whom you can say, 'Between us there can be no misunderstanding; whatever you and I do, together, is right'? Don't you want love now — crude, strong, masculine arms about you, holding you tight; a man who loves you, telling you that all 's well, that you are safe from trouble, as safe as

mortal man can make you? Don't you long for peace, the peace that comes at the end of the day, when you sit down beside the one whose presence is all you need to make you calm and happy and make you forget the small annoyances of life? Don't you know how different a room is when there is love in it, love between a man and a woman, from what it is when you are alone? Have you ever thought of what your life will be when Mary leaves you, when old age comes and you are alone? Will the memories that you cherish and that you say now are sufficient last as long as that? I think not: nature arranged that children's bones should bend and not break easily, as old bones do, so that children may play and fall and tumble and not suffer; nature does not intend that youthful hearts, however sorely hurt, shall carry the wound always; nature does not intend that an accident to youth shall end youth and bring old age. You and I are children still and youth will be served; youth cannot assume a sad countenance, freeze its heart and rout nature. Nature demands no such sacrifice, nature will not accept it. I know that you will love again, and marry again. I know that you love me, now; you want me, now; you long for the time that you know is surely coming, and

coming soon, when you will confess your love for me, and know that it is right for you to do so."

Duncan, alert for the effect his words would have on Marjorie, heard her gasp, quick and sharp, and then again. For a moment she did not move, then she rose unsteadily to her feet and like one in a trance, uncertain and afraid, she moved toward the door, reaching for it as though she needed its support. Duncan took her arm, guiding and supporting her into the cottage. In the light he saw her face, ashen white for all its summer tan; he saw her eyes — large, blue eyes that once he had thought were a flirt's eyes — dry and crying for deliverance from the torture that was in her heart.

She did not look at Duncan, but walked on to the stairs, and when she had the railing firmly in her hand he let her go upward, alone. He came back into the room and sat down in a chair under the lamp; he took a book, relighted his pipe, and smoked. But he did not read and his pipe soon went out. He sat listening and waiting.

He waited till her mother came home and he told her that Marjorie had gone upstairs because she was not well, and he had waited because he did not know whether or not any one else was there.

"Marjorie ill!" exclaimed Mrs. Read.

"I think Marjorie will recover quickly," he said, and he looked straight into the mother's eyes when he said it; and she knew, then, that Marjorie's illness was not of the flesh.

"Good-night," Duncan said. "If you want help, if I can do anything, call. I shall hear."

Mrs. Read understood only too well the great problem with which her daughter was struggling. She had known that, beyond all reasonable doubt, it must come some day. When she had met Duncan and come to know him well, when she had seen her daughter with him day after day, she was sure that the problem would have to be solved very soon, that it was being solved.

She went upstairs to her daughter's room and whispered, "Marjorie."

"Yes, Mother."

She went to the bed and sat down on its edge and Marjorie came to her arms.

"Are you ill, dearest?"

"No, Mother."

And, with her head on her mother's breast, the poor little girl fell asleep, so sound asleep that her mother laid her on her pillow without awakening her, and tiptoed from the room.

CHAPTER VIII

THAT night the wind, tired of blowing from the southwest, blew from the southeast and brought a cold, wet fog with it, a fog that by morning was almost but not quite rain. Duncan, after breakfast, sat beside a window through which he could see Marjorie's house. He tried to read, but it was a poor attempt, for his eyes were on the Thurston cottage far more than on his book.

But even so he saw no sign of Marjorie, and at eleven o'clock he went up the path to her door and there a maid told him that Mrs. Thurston was very sorry but would Mr. Webb please excuse her. The maid further said that Mrs. Thurston was quite well, but was very busy with her daughter.

Duncan went back to his cottage and an hour later, almost alone, swam, in the dreary fog. After lunch he saw Marjorie's car before her door and as he watched she drove away in it. He put on an old coat and hat, took his oilskins and went to his boat. He sailed all afternoon, alone, in

the rain and in a wind that made the knockabout fly through the gray water, sending torrents of salt spray on him.

Marjorie returned to her cottage at five o'clock and a few minutes later Mr. Lyle walked up on her piazza. When he saw Marjorie he was startled for a moment, for she was very pale and her eyes were very full of sadness, but Marjorie did not see the slightest indication of his surprise. Mr. Lyle looked sleepy; there was just a touch of melancholy on his face, as though he were tired and wanted to lie down and forget all his and the world's troubles. As she came toward him his lips twisted themselves about as though uncertain whether they should droop or smile.

"Won't you come in where it is warm?" she asked. "We have a wood fire. Is n't it a horrid day?"

Mr. Lyle went in, took off his coat, and held his hands before the fire.

"Are you well to-day?" he asked.

Marjorie glanced at him quickly. "Very well, thank you," she said. "Don't I look so?"

Mr. Lyle looked at her, making some show of his examination.

"H-m," he muttered, "I'm not quite sure. A little languid, perhaps; not quite your own glorious, youthful, happy self. It is the weather, no doubt, it would depress any one; to-morrow's sunshine will make everything all right. However, I presume you are well enough to do a little work."

"Oh, yes, indeed!" Marjorie's face brightened. "Is it detective work?"

"Something along those lines. Of course you know that the first thing a detective has to learn is absolute secrecy; he, or she, must never divulge a thing to any one."

"I promise I won't say a word. I 'm terribly excited."

"You 're quite sure that you 're game for a little adventure?"

"Sure, absolutely sure."

"Then suppose we go fishing to-morrow, very early, before breakfast."

"But I thought it was about — about the Brown robbery."

"It is. We 're going fishing for — ghosts." Mr. Lyle laughed.

"You 're teasing me."

"My dear young lady, you do me a grave injustice. Besides, you must remember that an im-

portant duty of an assistant sleuth is to obey orders without question."

"All right, I 'll obey. I suppose I shall be allowed to understand, eventually."

"Crackers and a glass of milk, at half-past six, and wait for me, to-morrow morning."

Marjorie looked incredulous, but she nodded. "Yes, sir; I 'll be ready."

Mr. Lyle rose. "I must be running along, to get the tackle ready. Have you ever seen the tackle that is used for ghost-fishing?"

"You 're the worst tease in the world!" she cried.

Mr. Lyle put on his coat and held out his hand to Marjorie and took her little hand in his great one, and by a gentle pressure turned her so that the light from the window fell on her face. "Look at me," he said, and Marjorie's great blue eyes rose to his.

"Do you believe that a ghost stole Mrs. Brown's jewels?" Mr. Lyle said.

"No, of course not. How silly!"

"You do not believe in ghosts at all, ever?"

"Why, no; nobody does."

"I am very glad. I was afraid you did. I thought I saw a ghost. I thought I saw a ghost 'way down deep in the blue of your eyes. Be

sure that there is no ghost there, for if there is it is a very bad ghost that can do you only harm and hurt you, a ghost that you should drive away." The girl's big eyes opened wide and her lips trembled. "Remember, ready at six-thirty to-morrow."

Marjorie's eyes fell and she did not look up till she heard him go down the steps, and then her eyes followed him. Her hand was on her breast, her breath came short and fast; she tried to understand what he had said to her: "Ghosts —'way down deep in the blue of my eyes. What did he mean? What did — Did he kiss me? I don't remember. I don't think he did — but I can feel his kiss — on my forehead — as though I had been kissed when I was asleep — as I kiss Mary — when she is asleep."

She sank into a chair and gazed into the fire. Why had Mr. Lyle spoken to her so? Why should he, a man who had known her for so short a time, be so interested in her? And why should he be able to exert such a strong influence over her? At first, before the fire, she resented his interest and his influence, but her resentment died quickly and the feeling of confidence and faith in him which he had given her from the beginning swept over her again. His voice as he

had spoken of her eyes, and his eyes as they had looked into hers, dominated her, even after he was gone. "He did not kiss me," she muttered. "I 'm sure he did not."

For the first time that day she felt some sort of peace within her; her nerves were quiet; she believed that she might be happy again some day. Samuel Lyle had soothed and comforted her. Half an hour later her mother found her, still gazing steadfastly into the fire.

Duncan came after dinner. Marjorie heard his footsteps on the piazza and said quickly to her mother, "Don't go — please," and her mother stayed, for she could not mistake Marjorie's wishes. They sat before the fire, the two women sewing and Duncan smoking; they talked, intermittently, of all manner of things except the one thing that Duncan wanted to talk about — the one thing that was in his heart.

There was but one living-room in Marjorie's house and but one fireplace, and close to it was the only comfortable place in the house. It was natural that Mrs. Read should be there. It would have been cruel to drive her away, and yet Duncan was quite aware that she was there primarily for quite another reason.

Duncan had met the six middle-aged and old,

gray- and white-haired ladies who sat together on the inn piazza, and he had found them very charming and delightful. He had chatted with them, singly and otherwise, casually, before and after meals, and methodically, with malice aforethought; and from them he had learned much of Mrs. Read. They could not sing her praises loudly enough, and the things they said were not the conventionally pleasant things that kind-hearted people say, but instead made up a tale of hardship and self-sacrifice, of courage and heroism, of long, hard work and finally of success and more fame than comes to most women. Side by side with that story ran a description of the woman herself, of her sweetness, her gentleness, her kindness, her wonderful insight and her tact.

Much of that Duncan knew because he knew Mrs. Read, and that evening he was very happy, despite the fact that Marjorie would not see him alone. He was content and he was confident. Marjorie's eyes would not meet his fairly, but wandered everywhere but toward him, and he believed that that was the best of omens. She was plainly nervous, though she tried her best to hide it, and he could discover no trace of enmity for himself, no resentment for the words he

had spoken to her the evening before. He knew that if what he had said to her was true, if she loved him despite her memories and her resolutions (and he believed that she did love him), then she would tell him so in her own good time. He had done all that he could do for the time being, without hurting his cause. His faith was strong that before very long all would be well.

Before the fire the mother gave no sign that she knew anything of what had happened or that serious business was afoot between her daughter and Duncan. She sewed on placidly, speaking in her low, soft voice, good-humored and witty, laughing a little, smiling much; and as Duncan watched her and listened to her he remembered sage advice that had once been given him on choosing a wife: "Find the best mother you can, and marry her daughter." He had not done that, but it had turned out that way. The daughter and mother were as alike as a young woman may be like her mother.

Duncan did not analyze the fact in any cold-blooded fashion, but any man who was not a fool must have rejoiced that the woman he loved was the daughter of such a woman. Duncan's thoughts ran forward through the years, picturing the girl at middle age, and the picture was

very beautiful, and the mother made it so.

Marjorie left them for a moment and when she was gone her mother spoke to Duncan: "You have asked Marjorie to marry you?" she said.

"Yes."

"She has not told me so, but of course I knew. I am sure that I understand why she has not told me; I think you must understand, too. Be gentle with her. She has had great sorrow and she is very steadfast; she is very young and it is soon for her to —"

Marjorie came into the room and Mrs. Read did not finish.

Duncan left early and before he went he had a chance, at the door, to speak to Marjorie, alone. "Are you going fishing to-morrow, early?"

She nodded. "Are you?"

"Yes, and somehow I believe that it will be a great adventure."

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Not a thing, except that I 'm to be ready to go ghost-fishing at half-past six. Good night."

"Good night." The word was whispered and, to Duncan as he went through the storm to his cottage, the whisper had in it a wonderful sweet-

ness that filled him with hope. But great as his hope was, he remembered her mother's words. Was it right for him to treat Marjorie as he was treating her? Was it not too soon for him to attempt to win her love? Was it fair and honorable to her? He stood on his piazza, turning the question over and over in his mind, and he knew that, right or wrong, the thing was done and that there was no going back.

Sometime during the night it stopped raining, and the wind, disgusted with the mess it had made of things, died completely, leaving the fog to do its worst alone.

Mr. Ferdinand Schwartz, his fine raiment gone, sat on the Brown piazza and told himself that it was the hell of a night. He took his watch from the small pocket of his trousers and discovered that it was not quite four o'clock; he got up and put his hand over the rail and discovered that to all appearances it was no longer raining; he walked down the steps and investigated the matter more thoroughly and confirmed the fact. He walked around the house and in a secluded corner lighted a cigar; he smoked it for a few minutes and then strolled across the lawn

toward the shore. He sat down, facing the sea, and finished his cigar, whereupon he lighted another from the remains of the first.

In due course the second cigar was consumed and this time Mr. Schwartz threw the end of it away, without ceremony. He looked at his watch and decided that it was time for it to begin to get light; he had no accurate information on the subject, but it seemed reasonable. Reasonable or not, it was still dark and Mr. Schwartz rose and sauntered back toward the Brown cottage.

Half-way to the cottage he stopped suddenly and listened intently. His lassitude vanished in a flash, he became alert, he turned back toward the water and flew silently over the grass toward the pier. He had heard the creak of a board in the pier walk, such a creak as can be made only by the pressure of a foot.

The light which Mr. Schwartz had thought behind time had come, only a trace of it, but still enough to make it possible for him to distinguish large objects a dozen feet away. He reached the walk and like a cat sped along it toward the pier, and out of the fog and darkness there appeared the outline of a human form.

The revolver in Mr. Schwartz's hand went up

and like a hiss he uttered the words, "Up, you, quick!"

The figure before him moved, as though with fright, its arms shot out sideways, and Mr. Schwartz, coming on rapidly, saw the figure tremble.

"Up, up!" he snapped, and the arms went up. "Stay as you are," he said, and the muzzle of his revolver touched the stranger's back. Mr. Schwartz's hand flew quickly over the stranger's hips, then forward, and suddenly Mr. Schwartz gasped:

"I'll be damned! — female." The interruption was only momentary; the search was completed and no weapons found.

"All right, take 'em down and don't move." The female lowered her arms. "Tell me, now, what in 'ell are you doing here?"

"What's that to you?" The voice was hoarse and conveyed much to Mr. Schwartz.

"Cranky, eh? Very well. Answer me this and do it right or it'll go hard with you. Are you alone?"

"Mind yer business, an' let me go."

"You 're alone, that's easy. As for mindin' my business, ye'll come with me, quiet, or I'll knock you on the head to quiet you."

He took the woman's arm in his great hand and, with little gentleness, pushed her over the grass.

"Where yer takin' me?"

"Where you can do no harm. Take it methodical, sissy; it 's not your night. You came a bit late."

The woman made no resistance and Mr. Schwartz led her to the Brown garage. "Not a sound, now," Mr. Schwartz said. Following his own instructions made it difficult for him to rouse Thomas, but eventually he was successful and Thomas, scantily clad and bewildered, opened the garage door.

"A little present for Sam Lyle," said Mr. Schwartz. "We 'll keep it here till breakfast time, if you don't mind."

"Let me go," the woman cried. "I 've done nothin' to yer."

"That 's as may be. I m more interested in what you were goin' to do. There 's light needed on that."

Thomas knew neither the man nor the woman and was in a sorry plight.

"Are you from Mr. Lyle?" he asked.

"Neither more nor less," said Mr. Schwartz. "Let 's have a light, inside somewhere." He

pushed the woman into the garage, past Thomas, and Thomas, too amazed to protest, followed and turned on the lights. Mr. Schwartz looked about.

"Any rooms upstairs?" he asked.

"There 's two of 'em empty," Thomas said.

"I won't go upstairs," the woman muttered.

"Be quiet! You 'll do as you 're told, as you well know. Come along."

The woman went, sobbing, upstairs and Mr. Schwartz found what he wanted, an empty room. "Get a chair, the one by the door," he said to Thomas, "and bring along the chain and padlock you 've got round the spare tires on the big car."

Thomas brought the chair and the chain, and the woman, suddenly giving way to a burst of passion, screamed and began to struggle. In a flash Mr. Schwartz's hand was over her mouth, his other hand twisted her arm behind her, and she sank, beaten, into the chair.

"Don't be a fool," Mr. Schwartz said, and the woman glared at him. He slipped the heavy chain around her waist and through the back of the chair, drew it tight and snapped the padlock through a link.

"Will you be quiet or will you be gagged?"

The woman did not answer.

"Very well; you 'll not be heard in any case, and you know what 's good for you. You 'll stay here till Mr. Lyle comes in the morning and hears what you have to say. Have you a bit of rope, Thomas?"

Thomas, moving like a man in a dream, found a bit of rope. Mr. Schwartz pushed the chair, with the woman in it, to the open door and against its edge and made the chair fast to the knobs on both sides of it.

"Now be good," he said to her, and to Thomas: "Stay here. If she starts anything, yell: I 'll be close by and I 'll hear you. Come here." Thomas went out of the room with Mr. Schwartz. "Let her go and there 'll be hell to pay. She 's a bad 'un. Stick your head out of the window and yell your head off if she starts anything, and don't say a word to her. Them 's orders from Mr. Lyle."

Mr. Schwartz went downstairs and out into the fog; he ran across the grass to the pier and along it, stopped, returned, sat down on a rock where he was concealed by bushes, and waited.

About an hour and a half later — or to be exact, at twenty minutes after six — Georgiana, dressed with even less than her usual care,

rushed out of the house and to the garage. She had supposed that the door would be locked and that she would have to wake Thomas, but it was open and she did not stop to wonder why. She pushed open the sliding doors, sprang into her runabout, started the engine and drove with reckless speed to Mr. Lyle's cottage. She banged on Mr. Lyle's door and shouted, and Mr. Lyle, fully dressed, answered her immediately.

"We 've been robbed again," she cried.

"Good heavens!"

"Exactly as it happened before," Georgiana exclaimed.

"Apparently Mother has the habit," Mr. Lyle said.

"Oh, please don't joke. Will you come? I have a car."

"Of course. Let me get a coat to keep the dampness from my old bones."

He put on a coat and cap and went through the fog to Georgiana's car. "I want to take Duncan Webb," he said. Georgiana made no protest, but drove to Duncan's house. Duncan was on the piazza.

"Get Mrs. Thurston and come to the Browns' as quickly as you can. They have been robbed again."

Georgiana drove on. "Why Mrs. Thurston?" she asked.

"She has a fine eye for ghosts," Mr. Lyle said, and Georgiana did not answer.

Marjorie, waiting as Duncan was, heard voices through the fog and, running down the steps, met Duncan.

"Come," he said; "the Browns have been robbed again." He put his arm through hers, and they went as fast as they could to the Browns', through the fog that was so thick that they could not see twenty paces before them.

"Are you well?" Duncan asked.

"Yes. What happened?"

"I only know that they 've been robbed again. I don't know the details."

"When did it happen? Was anybody hurt?"

"Those are among the details I don't know, but I don't believe any one knew anything about it till it was all over, and accordingly I don't believe any one got shot up or black-jacked. Georgiana did n't say anything of the sort."

They were going along the Sea-way, which was close to the shore; bushes and small trees, soaking wet, were so close to it on each side that they had to go in single file, and often had to bend low to escape a drenching.

Marjorie, going first, slipped under a branch, stood upright, and struck another a glancing blow with her head. She sprang forward so quickly that she escaped the shower and looked back to see if it had fallen on Duncan; it had and she laughed. She took a stone wall almost in her stride, and was in an open field. Duncan came up beside her.

"You seem in pretty good spirits this morning," he said.

She looked up at him, smiling. "I'm terribly excited," she exclaimed.

"Old Sammy has a real job on his hands now. Perhaps we'll get some real action."

"Fishing for ghosts?" Marjorie laughed. "I wonder what he really meant."

"Lord knows. Perhaps he'll tell us."

They came to another stone wall, this time a high one, and he took her arm, but even this precaution did not prevent her tripping. She tried to regain her balance, spun round and fell into his arms; and placed there as she was by the merest chance, falling like a feather, as gently as though it had been planned, he held her close to him. Her head had fallen in the hollow of his arm, her face was turned up to his. A thrill shot through him, ecstasy swept over

him. She lay there, without a protest, gazing up at him.

She waited, and Duncan saw her eyes and let her go. She stood before him, waiting, her blue eyes fixed on his.

"No, Marjorie," he said. "I knew better than to do —"

"I 'm glad you did," she said, and turned and dashed away and Duncan followed, thanking Heaven, over and over again, that he had resisted the temptation to kiss her. Great as had been the temptation, he had not succumbed to it. No such sudden chance occurrence could overcome his sure knowledge that no physical emotion could sweep Marjorie and her love to him. And he was very sure that, when she remained motionless in his arms for that instant, she was testing his honor and not his courage.

Mr. Lyle and Georgiana had reached the Brown cottage only a moment before them. Mr. Brown was on the piazza, talking with Mr. Lyle. Mrs. Brown was sitting in the hall, perhaps believing that that position was near the scene of the crime and yet offered a way of escape from the house if anything happened. The servants were in a group in the dining-room.

"Again, exactly as it was before," Mr. Brown

was saying, "except, still more remarkable, the door between —"

"Suppose we go upstairs," Mr. Lyle said, and Mr. Brown led the way with all the others following. Mr. Lyle went into Mrs. Brown's room and looked about. "Everything is as it was found this morning?" he asked.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Brown. "Not a thing has been touched."

The shutters were closed and bolted, the small bureau drawer was open, the empty jewel-box was on the bureau top, and the drawer was undamaged — it had not been forced open. The door to Mr. Brown's room was closed.

"All the shutters were closed last night, and fastened, as they are now?" Mr. Lyle asked.

"Yes, exactly as they are now: we have not touched them," Mr. Brown said, "but the door between the two rooms was open. Now it is closed and stuck fast, so hard that when Mrs. Brown called I had to go into the hall to reach her room. My door and hers were both locked."

"What time did you got to bed?"

"About eleven."

"What time did you discover the robbery?"

"About six o'clock, virtually as soon as I woke up," Mrs. Brown said. "I saw that the door

to Mr. Brown's room was closed and I wondered how it had gotten that way; I was sure it had n't been shut the night before. It made me think of the robbery last year and I looked toward the bureau and saw the jewel-box on it. I knew I had put it in the drawer and locked the drawer. Then I got up."

"You slept well last night?"

"I did, unusually well."

"And did n't hear any unusual sounds?"

"Not a sound."

Mr. Lyle turned to Georgiana. "By coincidence it was very wet last night, just as it was on the night of the first robbery. Has a search been made for wet clothes, or shoes?"

"Nothing has been done, that I know of," Georgiana said.

"Nothing has been done," Mr. Brown volunteered.

"It is not important; it can wait. Did any one hear the dog bark?" No one had heard the dog bark. "Where is he now?" Mr. Lyle asked. No one had seen the dog.

"Was he tied last night?"

"No. He always sleeps on a rug in the hall."

"H-m," muttered Mr. Lyle. "And the key to this drawer?"

"We can't find the key; it 's gone," Mrs. Brown said.

"This time it was not, of course, on the nail behind the picture. I presume that you put it in the 'Egoist' as usual?"

Mrs. Brown gasped and then had an inspiration. "Did Mr. Brown tell you I kept it there?"

"I did not," Mr. Brown exclaimed. "I distinctly remember that Mr. Lyle told me it should be a family secret."

"Then how did you know?" demanded Mrs. Brown. "No one else knew where it was."

"It was such an obvious place to hide a thin, flat key." Mr. Lyle went to the bookcase and took the "Egoist" from it. It was the last book of the set, on the right. He turned the pages rapidly and closed the book. "Personally I rather like 'The Amazing Marriage,'" he said. "Is it here?" He stepped back from the bookcase and ran his eye over the titles of the set of Meredith. "Here it is," he said, and drew out the book on the extreme left. He turned toward Mrs. Brown. "Are you sure you did not put the key in 'The Amazing Marriage'?" he asked.

"Absolutely sure," Mrs. Brown exclaimed.

Mr. Lyle handed the book to Mrs. Brown, she

[illegible]

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"The ghost has walked again," Mr. Lyle said; "the same ghost, the same stormy night, the same jewels are gone. History repeats itself." And then to Georgiana. "Is your conscience clear, this time, as always?"

"Are we to go on being robbed, regularly, once a year, forever?" Georgiana demanded. "Can't anything be done about it?"

"Have you ever yet seen a ghost caught?" Mr. Lyle asked.

"Fiddlesticks!" she exclaimed. "If the detectives were n't all men they 'd be caught quickly enough."

"Set a woman to catch a woman. Is that your

plan? It would have been rather rough on Mrs. Brown the other time, don't you think? But we're wasting time."

"Shall we notify the police?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"I think not," said Mr. Lyle. "It seems to me that everything is exactly as it was before, the other time a year ago. The police accomplished nothing then; would they accomplish anything now? The cases are exactly parallel."

Mr. Lyle went to the door, put his shoulder against it, and the door opened with a noise that would have waked the dead.

"The ghost closed it to prevent your making an unexpected appearance," he said to Mr. Brown. "He was not afraid of Mrs. Brown. The other time it was already closed for him."

"And the key," said Mrs. Brown. "He found the key, how did he do that?"

"Ghosts see many things," said Mr. Lyle, "and are seldom seen. Shall we look outside under the windows and around the house?"

They all went downstairs and outdoors, but the closest search did not disclose a single suspicious mark on the ground or on the house itself. Mr. Lyle walked slowly back to the piazza. "Suppose we try to find the dog," he said. They

found the terrier fast asleep behind a couch, and waked him and stood him on his feet, but he desired nothing so much as to lie down and sleep again. They let him sleep and went back to the piazza.

"Drugged," said Mr. Brown.

"Unquestionably," said Mr. Lyle. "But how on earth do you suppose a ghost could drug a dog? Where do ghosts get drugs?"

"Ghosts! I 'm getting tired of ghosts," cried Georgiana. "Why does n't somebody do something?"

"Who is there to do anything? What can be done?" asked Mr. Lyle.

"You — anybody! Are we to be robbed every summer and no one ever caught?"

"I think not," said Mr. Lyle. "I think not. It seems to me that the thief — the ghost — will get tired of working hard and getting nothing for it. He 'll move on to other fields."

"He has Mother's jewels," Georgiana expostulated.

"You mean he had them."

"He took them."

"Of course he did, and he took them before. That is, he took them from Mrs. Brown's room, but he did n't take them very far away; he left

them under the pier. Surely any self-respecting ghost would soon become tired of wandering about in the rain, squeezing through cracks in shutters, and all the rest of it, just for the fun of hiding somebody's pearl necklace. Now don't you think that—?"

At that moment Mr. Ferdinand Schwartz appeared around the corner of the house and held up a beckoning finger to Mr. Lyle. Mr. Schwartz wore no hat and his hair was not brushed; his shirt was blue flannel, open at the throat, his trousers brown and old; his shoes were old brown sneakers. Mr. Lyle rose and went to Mr. Schwartz, they spoke together for a moment and then Mr. Lyle returned.

"We are all in for a surprise, I think," he said.

"Where did that man come from? Who is he?" asked Georgiana.

"He is an iconoclast. His hobby is ghosts and goodness knows where he came from."

"He is a great personal friend of Mr. Lyle's," Marjorie said.

"Which statement is a breach of faith and against all ethics of the profession," said Mr. Lyle.

"Oh, I'm so sorry! I should not have said that. Please forgive me."

"This time, but let it be a lesson to you. However, Mrs. Thurston told the truth: the gentleman *is* a great personal friend of mine. He will be here again in a minute, bringing his surprise with him."

Mr. Schwartz did return promptly, with Thomas, and between them was the woman. Mr. Schwartz lost no time in formalities.

"I found this girl on the place last night," he said. "What 'll I do with her?"

The "girl" was shabbily dressed, her hair was disarranged, she wore an old black sailor hat; her face was pale; she was very thin, her expression was sullen; there was no sign of a lady about her from top to toe, and yet in her crude way she was good-looking. Her dark eyes had some sort of courage in them, her lips had a trace of sweetness about them. Her age was difficult to guess, she was not over thirty and might have been much younger than that. She stared first at one and then at another of the group on the piazza, and finally, as though intuitively, she fixed her eyes on Mr. Lyle.

"Why were you about here, at night, and on such a night?" Mr. Lyle asked her. His voice was low, its tone very gentle, it was as though he

were speaking kindly to a little child. The woman was silent.

"Won't you tell us? Have n't we the right to know? If you meant no harm you should be willing to tell why you came." Still the girl did not speak. "Do you live near here?"

"I live at Nollett's Point. I got lost in the fog." Her voice was hoarse, as it had been when she had spoken to Mr. Schwartz.

"What is your name?"

"Sarah Loney."

"And you live at Nollett's Point? Do you work there?"

"In the 'otel."

"I see. Where had you been when you got lost?"

The woman hesitated for an instant. "Over there, somewheres." She finally indicated a northerly direction. "I don't know just where."

"And you were walking back to Nollett's Point?"

The woman nodded, slowly.

"I see; it was a long walk, especially on such a bad night, was n't it?" Mr. Lyle rose and went to her and touched her clothes. "You are wet through," he said. "You must be cold.

How long is it since you have had anything to eat?"

"Yesterday noon."

"You must be hungry, too." And then, in a voice so low that no one but her could hear, he said, "Do you know Walter Kerrigan?"

The woman trembled; her eyes opened wide and stared in terror at Mr. Lyle. He turned from her and spoke to Mrs. Brown. "This poor woman needs some dry clothes and food," he said. "May she have them?"

"Of course she may have them. Georgiana, you —"

"Can't Katie help her? I would rather Miss Brown stayed here, if you don't mind, and she is quite willing."

Mrs. Brown called Katie and Katie came and received her instructions. Mr. Lyle spoke to the woman again, in a whisper. "Don't try to run away," he said. "It would do no good to try, and I want to talk with you. I know why you are here."

Again the woman stared at Mr. Lyle, wide-eyed. "Go with Katie," he said, and the woman turned and followed Katie into the house.

Mr. Lyle went back to his chair and sank into it.

"We almost caught the ghost, but not quite," he said.

"She 's lying, is n't she?" said Georgiana.

Mr. Lyle nodded. "She is, poor woman," he said. "If I am not mistaken she has known more sorrow, more hardship, more tragedy than all of us together shall ever know. She is one of the world's unfortunates, cursed from the moment of her birth, probably before her birth. Once upon a time I looked on such women as she with loathing, I have seen many of them, and the more I learned of them the more my loathing has vanished and the greater my sympathy has become. If all the truth were known of this woman, I am sure that we should find such virtues in her as would do honor to the finest lady in the land. She has little knowledge of right and wrong as we know it, but she has a heart that is pure gold. I may be wrong, but I believe that that is so. If I am wrong I shall tell you so, sometime."

Mr. Lyle went to Ferdinand Schwartz and spoke to him for a moment. Mr. Schwartz nodded and departed, and Mr. Lyle returned to his chair.

"We don't seem to be getting any nearer to the ghost, do we?" he said.

"Did n't that woman have something to do with it?" Georgiana asked.

"Woman's inhumanity to woman," Mr. Lyle said, smiling at Georgiana.

"What was she doing here, then?"

"Perhaps she is the innocent friend of our ghost. Perhaps the ghost, in his original form, was her lover. All ghosts were real living persons once upon a time, you know. Perhaps this woman is so faithful to her love that she follows its shadow, searches for it, wherever her tortured brain conceives it to be; even in the rain and fog such as we had last night, perhaps she sees a face and a form fashioned in the mists; perhaps she haunts the places her man once haunted; perhaps she dreams wild, fantastic dreams. Perhaps, a year ago, the ghost told her of his visit here and of what he had done and perhaps soon after that he disappeared and she was never able to find him; perhaps ghosts are sometimes fickle in their loves and he left her. And then, perhaps, by some phenomenon, through some mysterious medium which ordinary, normal minds cannot even guess at, she learned that he was coming here again last night and she came here to find him. Schwartz says that she was going across the lawn toward the pier, that she was in

fact on the pier walk when he first saw her. Does not that suggest to you that she knew the ghost, the other time, had gone to the pier and hidden the jewels there and that she believed he would go there again to hide the booty?"

"It 's utterly impossible," Georgiana exclaimed.

Georgiana was the only one who was willing to express any opinion whatever. Mr. and Mrs. Brown were in a trance: the whole thing was beyond their comprehension. Marjorie's blue eyes were fixed on Mr. Lyle, in wonder, as though she were willing to believe anything and yet believed nothing. Duncan sat on the piazza rail, grinning.

"Perhaps the ghost beat her to it," he said. "It must have been nearly daylight when Schwartz found her and in all probability the ghost had done his work and gone. Ghosts have to be home and in bed before sunrise, I understand."

"Exactly," Mr. Lyle said. "The poor woman had, without doubt, hovered around the house most of the night, waiting; and, seeing nothing because of the dense fog, went to the pier, too late. If all that is so, does n't it explain everything? Does n't it even bring vindication to Mrs.

Brown, at last, and save Miss Brown the humiliation of having a fond parent in jail?"

"It's all perfect nonsense!" Georgiana exclaimed.

"Not at all, not at all," Mr. Lyle said. "Think a minute, consider the deadly parallel. First you have the stormy night, again; then the entry without a trace left behind, the same lack of sound, the same jewelry taken, the door between the rooms left closed, as it was the other time, the same people in the house, the same servants of unquestioned honesty; not a clue to be had, not a person is suspected. The lines are parallel to that point; is it not a perfectly logical deduction that they will stay parallel to the end?"

"If that is so, the jewelry must be under the pier, just where it was before," Duncan said calmly.

Mr. Lyle nodded. "Of course it must be. If our reasoning is correct. Why don't you go down and see if it is there?"

Duncan slid from the piazza railing. "Come on," he called, and Marjorie, with excitement written all over her, jumped up and followed him. Georgiana hesitated for an instant and, hesitating, was lost: the others were far away,

and she decided on the dignified course. She sat down.

Mrs. Brown gasped.

Mr. Brown, bewildered, asked, "Is it a joke?"

"Far from it," Mr. Lyle said. "The jewelry may not be there, but if it is n't there then I throw up my hands."

Marjorie and Duncan ran across the lawn to the pier walk and along it where it left the ground and was carried on small piles across the rocky beach. They looked under it and saw nothing but rocks and seaweed Duncan stepped back and from a distance determined where, six weeks before, Sandy, the Airedale, had dug for the rat.

"Look," he cried, pointing. "Do you see the bump in that seaweed?"

Marjorie saw. She sprang to it and her slender hands pulled away the wet mass.

"A pail!" she shouted, and drew it forth, battered and rusty. She shook it. "Open it," she cried.

Duncan worked the cover loose and they looked into the pail and then stared at each other.

"Ha, ha," Duncan exclaimed.

"For Heaven's sake!" Marjorie's exclamation was a whisper.

"Fishing, fishing for ghosts," Duncan said.

"How did he know?"

"Don't ask me; but he knew, sure enough, and I 'll bet my last dollar he knows who did it."

"The woman?"

"Maybe, but I don't believe so. My guess is he was as surprised to see her as we were. Come along; we must n't keep them waiting," Duncan replaced the cover and they started back for the house.

"It's beyond me. I have n't an idea, have you?" Marjorie said.

"Not an idea, but you can bet your last dollar Sammy Lyle has, and he 'll tell us the whole story when he gets good and ready; see if he does n't."

"If he does n't I 'll never forgive him." And then they came to the piazza.

Georgiana saw them and the pail Duncan was carrying and sprang to her feet.

"Where did you find it?" she cried.

"Under the pier, partly covered with seaweed, just where the other pail was," Duncan answered.

"What 's in it?"

"Gold and precious stones," Duncan said.

Mr. Lyle held out his hand for the pail and took it; he shook it gently close to his ear, pried

off the cover, looked at its contents, and handed it to Mrs. Brown.

"Are they all there?" he asked.

The servants were hovering about, wild-eyed and trembling; some of them, perhaps, had no confidence in the non-existence of ghosts. Georgiana's eyes shot a mixture of hatred and unqualified admiration at Mr. Lyle; she had a dim suspicion that Mr. Lyle was making fun of her and hers. Mr. Brown stood beside Mrs. Brown and peered into the lard pail, his face a picture of amazement.

Mrs. Brown placed the pail in her lap. "Everything is here," she said. "It 's the most extraordinary thing I 've ever heard of in my life!"

"No, no!" Mr. Lyle said. "Our ghost is simply a creature of habit, that 's all."

"Can a ghost close quietly a door that I cannot close without waking the dead?" Mr. Brown almost shouted.

"Apparently he can," said Mr. Lyle.

"And find keys in my books," Mrs. Brown said sarcastically.

"Apparently he did," said Mr. Lyle. "And do you suppose that I — we — might have a cup of coffee? It must be breakfast time."

Mrs. Brown gasped again. "Imagine thinking of breakfast at a time like this!"

"Breakfast is ready." The voice came from among the servants.

"Good," exclaimed Mr. Lyle. "Perhaps in the circumstances we, my assistants and I, may consider ourselves invited to breakfast. But before we go may I say a word, while we are all here together —" Mr. Lyle's eyes went from one to the other, from master to servant. "Before we go to breakfast," he said, "perhaps you would like to know just what has happened. For instance the vindication of Mrs. Brown might make breakfast taste better to Miss Brown." Mr. Lyle turned to Georgiana. "By the way, do you consider that your mother is vindicated at last?"

Georgiana was hardly in a frame of mind to joke, but she stuck to her guns. "Everything is exactly as it was before," she said.

"Not quite. Can you conceive, it is physically possible, that your mother could drug the dog?—that she would do it if she could?—that she could know how to do it? Hardly, I think. And could she close the door between the two rooms so firmly that Mr. Brown found it too difficult for him to open? I doubt it. I am afraid you will have to exonerate Mrs. Brown.

"From the evidence it is perfectly clear that we have to deal with not only a physical mystery, almost a physical impossibility, but also with a mysterious motive. It is apparent that these robberies have been performed by no common man, by a man of peculiar mentality and views of life, for gain has not been his motive — otherwise he would not have left behind him the fruits of his dishonorable labor. There is a ghost-like quality in our thief — he comes and goes, leaving no trace; he does many peculiar things which we cannot understand. But then, you know, we mortals understand very little of what goes on in this world. I, perhaps, know more about crimes and criminals than the average person, but even so, I know very little. I have studied the supernatural so as to differentiate between it and the natural; I have studied ghosts, made friends with them, and learned much from them, and it happens that in my research and travels I ran across the ghost who has played pranks about here: he is a good friend of mine, though I do not always approve of what he does. I may not tell you who he is; to do so would serve no useful purpose and might do great harm. He is out of our world, beyond our reach. Our wrath, our vindictiveness, our desire for justice

or revenge, our curiosity, cannot harm him, and never can; ghosts care nothing for what we may do or say. But I may tell you this: he will never come here again; none of us will ever see him. I know him well and I know that no one here in this house or in this neighborhood gave him aid or knew his plans or had a suspicion that he was, or ever had been, or ever would be, in this house.

"The police came and went away that first time, leaving the suspicion behind them that some one here, presumably among the servants, knew more than he or she was willing to tell, in fact that he or she had a guilty knowledge of the crime. You must believe me when I say that that suspicion was absolutely without foundation or merit and you must forget that such a suspicion ever existed. My friend the ghost will never walk here or elsewhere, I give you my word for that. As for the woman who came here last night, dismiss her from your minds; she is the innocent victim of the ghost. I shall probably know more about her before the day is over and she will probably go back where she came from. She was on a wild-goose chase last night." Mr. Lyle turned to the servants. "Where is she now?"

The cook answered. "She 's cryin' her eyes out, sir."

"Can Katie stay with her?" Mr. Lyle asked Mrs. Brown, and then he turned and looked at Katie.

"She's in my bed, sir, asleep; she's near dead," Katie said, and Katie's voice trembled and she was crying herself.

"Let her stay there till she wakes up," Mr. Lyle said and then in a voice so low that only Mrs. Brown heard, he said: "I trust, Madam, that your overwhelming curiosity will promote the friendship which I hope shall exist between us for many a long day."

"You — you — you are a — devil," said Mrs. Brown, "and I *will* know."

Mr. Lyle smiled and they went into breakfast.

CHAPTER IX

AT breakfast Marjorie sat opposite Duncan and before the meal was over the robbery and everything connected with it had sunk into insignificance. She knew her own weakness well; she knew that, confident of herself, trusting implicitly in the strength of her memories, in her unalterable determination, she had played with fire, unconsciously at first and then knowingly. She had acted toward Duncan as any heart-free, normal girl would have acted toward a man she liked, in the summer-time. Circumstances had been against her; there had been no other young men in Rose Hill whom she had liked, except one or two who had come and played and gone away. Step by step, with never a thought of danger, she had let her friendship and intimacy with Duncan ripen until it had become a matter of course for them to do together, every day, the things they both liked to do, sailing, playing golf and auction, swiming, driving, walking, reading, until suddenly she knew, as women know, where she had led him.

The knowledge shocked her; she was ashamed, and she resolved that she would, if she could, undo the harm that she had done. But what could she do? She knew, as every woman knows, that if she suddenly became difficult, showed indifference, evaded him, she would to all appearances be playing the game that a woman often plays to win a man. Duncan might believe that he understood the game thoroughly and if he did she would have cheapened herself greatly in his eyes; she might drive him away from her in that way, but she was not willing to cheapen herself even for so worthy a purpose. If he did not understand, if, being in love, he was blind to such simple artifices, then her actions would only make things immeasurably worse than they were.

She had decided finally to be honest and straightforward, to tell him the truth frankly. But how could she do that until he gave her the opportunity? She could not say to him out of a clear sky: "I know you love me. I know that it is my fault that you do and I am very sorry, but you must forgive me and stop loving me, because I can never love you, or any other man."

She could not say that; it would be even worse than making believe she was tired of him, that he bored her, and that she wanted him to

keep away from her. She could not tell him that she knew he loved her when he had not told her so; to tell him that she knew it without his telling her so was beyond her power.

So she had drifted along, day after day, dreading the time that she knew would come, when she must admit her fault, beg forgiveness, and send him away. She liked him, she respected him, she understood full well his charm, his kindness, his wholesomeness; she had a curious sort of affection for him, almost the sort of affection a girl may have for a brother or an uncle; to hurt him, to make him unhappy, would make her very unhappy.

When it was too late and she knew it was too late, she had stammered out some weak protest, and he, seeming to understand her every thought, had told her of his love and his determination to win her, in a voice that made her know that beyond a shadow of a doubt he would never give up hope of winning her while she was free to be won; and he made her understand very clearly that he believed that she was free despite what had gone before.

Then she had listened to him and argued with him; futilely; his determination had not been shaken, she had seen subtle signs of confidence

in him, and finally he had told her that he knew she loved him.

Her mother had taken her in her arms and comforted her, but her mother had said nothing. It seemed almost as though her mother were on Duncan's side, as though her attitude were that it was inevitable that love must come to her again, even that it had come and that she was powerless to resist it. Samuel Lyle had known, as soon as he had seen Duncan and her together, that Duncan loved her, and he had taken Duncan's part; he had spoken to her as though he knew how impossible it was, and how wrong it would be for her to resist the love that he believed was creeping over her. She knew, too, that the world would be against her, that it would laugh at her and think that she was a fool.

But she was not a fool. No one understood but her; and at breakfast at the Browns' she made her final resolution, and she made it knowing that Duncan's eyes were on her, knowing that try as she would she could not meet them, and knowing that she would sacrifice everything the world held for her to save him from pain and unhappiness, except her faithfulness to the boy who was dead.

She left the Browns' with Duncan and Mr.

Lyle, to walk back to Rose Hill. They walked slowly, almost without a word. Marjorie was saying to herself, over and over again, the words that she had resolved to say to Duncan; he was waiting, not for Mr. Lyle to tell them what had really happened at the Browns', but for the time when he could speak to Marjorie alone.

When they came to the path that led up the hill to Duncan's cottage, and past it to Marjorie's, Mr. Lyle stopped and looked upward.

"Sou'easters don't last long, do they? The sun will be out any minute," he said.

"Are your make-believe assistants ever going to know who really robbed the Browns?" Marjorie asked.

"Assistants! Fine assistants you two are, moping about and crying your hearts out over something that is n't of any consequence at all, whatever it is, instead of helping me. I 'm through with both of you. I have troubles enough without trying to find out what ails you and wondering whether I ought to send for a doctor. No, sirree! I 'm through with you till you cheer up and act like grown-up, sane, human beings, instead of being as melancholy as a pair of melancholy Danes. I 'm going to see if I can find a ghost,—a cheerful, friendly, pleasant

ghost,— to chat with in the fog before it blows away or gets burned up." Mr. Lyle looked at them intently, his face as severe as he could make it, and then he went off, leaving them staring after him.

Marjorie watched him till he disappeared and then she turned her big blue eyes up to Duncan's. She stood so for a moment, waiting for her chance to speak. Duncan waited, resisting again his wild desire to take her in his arms, longing to see confession and surrender in her eyes. Instead he saw pleading, as though she were saying: "Please be kind to me, be gentle. Please do as I wish you to do. Don't make me fight against you: it can do no good, either to you or to me."

"Don't you love me, Marjorie?" His voice was a whisper.

"No, Duncan, I cannot. Won't you understand?"

"I cannot understand."

"You must. I have done wrong to let you love me. I am very sorry and you must forgive me."

"You have not done wrong; there is nothing to forgive. I know that you will love again. I know that you love me, now, and some day you will tell me so." He spoke very gently.

"No, Duncan, and you must promise me never to speak of love to me again. Unless you promise I cannot — I cannot see you — any more."

Duncan smiled. "Are you afraid to see me any more, Marjorie?"

"No," she cried, "I am not afraid. You must believe that what I tell you is true, and it would not be right. No decent woman would let a man — go on — making love to her — listening to him — when she knew — when she knew that she could never love him."

"But suppose that what you tell me is not true — that you can never love again. Suppose you do love again — love me. Will you tell me so without my asking you? Are you afraid to give me my chance to make you love me? Every woman is capable of love, no matter what has gone before. If you are so sure of yourself I cannot harm you — by loving you, and you — you will break my heart if you send me away."

"I do not want to send you away, Duncan. I want you to be my friend. But I want you to understand that we can never be more than good friends."

"But you and I are so very young; almost all of our lives are before us. Do you believe that it is right to ask me to promise, now, something

that will bind me all my life? I can't, Marjorie, I can't."

"You must, Duncan, or else I cannot — see you any more — alone. We must be friends, here in Rose Hill: every one knows that we have been friends all summer and if — if — you understand."

Duncan, in that most serious moment, laughed. "Oh, Marjorie, how foolish we are!" he cried. "Of course I understand. Poor old Rose Hill can't be allowed to gossip, can't have two real, exciting, mysterious love affairs to talk about in one summer. Rose Hill's old ladies may talk about me all they like, to their hearts' content, but they must n't be allowed to talk about you, if I can help it. I 'll tell you what we 'll do. We 'll compromise. You 'll be here three weeks more. Let me ask you just once a week to marry me, until you go away, and then Heaven knows what will happen. Give me my chance, once a week, beginning a week from to-day."

"Oh, Duncan, please!"

"Oh, Marjorie, please! Is n't it fair?— one day a week, and such a very small part of that day? All the rest of that time you can laugh at me, I 'll be helpless, and we can go on just as we have been, and nobody 'll know anything 's

wrong. Sammy Lyle will tell us all about what happened, and — and —"

"You 're laughing at me." Marjorie was almost laughing herself. Poor Marjorie! Nothing that she could say seemed to shake Duncan's determination or drive away his good nature.

"If I don't laugh I'll cry," Duncan said. "Please, please give me my chance."

"You promise that —"

"I promise. Only once a week."

"And will you promise to stop the minute I tell you to?"

"I 'll promise anything on earth, except to stop loving you. Is it settled?"

Marjorie nodded. "All right," she said.

When she was alone in her cottage she knew that Duncan had beaten down her defenses and smashed her resolution to bits. Through all her talk with him she had heard the note of confidence in his voice. She remembered the night on the rocks, and the hour on her piazza when he had not spoken to her at all, and the silence had been almost terrifying and she dreaded the prospect of more such silences, now that she had his promise.

She found Mary, took her to her room, and

closed the door, and she kissed her baby again and again. "You 're the only friend I have in the world," she said, and then she sighed. "Only three weeks, honey, and our troubles will all be over." She kissed Mary again. "I wish I were sure of that," she murmured.

She laid her daughter on the bed and played with her Finally she said, "Come along, let 's go swimming, Sweetness."

The sun was shining brightly, the gentle southwest breeze was at work again. No word of the second Brown robbery had reached Rose Hill. Duncan was waiting for her. She left Mary, in her go-cart, with another mother, and went into the water with Duncan. He laughed and she hated him for laughing; he sat on the float while she swam on her back. He dived and swam beside her.

"Do you remember the time I nearly saved you from drowning?" he asked her. 'It seems ages ago, does n't it?"

"Yes," she said, "it does."

"As I recall it, it was on the nurse's day out."

"Yes," she said, "it was."

"Likewise it was the day I entertained Mary on the beach, heard the story of the Brown tragedy, and by the use of logic recovered the

loot. Is n't this the nurse's afternoon off?"

"Where do you suppose Mr. Lyle is?"

"Maybe it 's his morning off. I 'm going to ask Mary to spend the afternoon with me. Do you suppose she will?"

"You 'd better ask her."

Mary, later on, was non-committal. Mr. Lyle was not to be found, up to three o'clock, when the search ended.

Mr. Schwartz, having turned Sarah Loney over to Mr. Lyle and having received his orders before breakfast at the Browns', repaired to a convenient telephone in Rose Hill and communicated with the New York police. At noon he had the information he wanted and transmitted it to Mr. Lyle, and after lunch he and Mr. Lyle, driven by Thomas in the Brown car, drove away with Sarah Loney. The job was not pleasant to Mr. Lyle, but he gritted his teeth and made the best of it, the worst of it being that Sarah had gotten it into her head that Mr. Lyle had been sent to her by Heaven and tried to show her appreciation by perfectly honest expressions of infatuation. He returned to Rose Hill late that night and slept late the next morning, all of

which explains why Duncan had not been able to find him.

Duncan's search for Mr. Lyle ended because Marjorie left her cottage, pushing Mary ahead of her in the go-cart, and because Duncan had hoped that she would do just that and was waiting for her.

Mary had been non-committal when Duncan invited her to spend the afternoon with him on the little beach on the Sea-way, and Duncan had taken her silence to mean consent. Her mother had shown no interest in the affair one way or the other. When she saw Duncan waiting she showed no interest in his plans for the afternoon.

"Have you found Mr. Lyle?" she asked.

"No, he's gone off somewhere; he's not in Rose Hill."

"He's coming back, isn't he?"

"Yes, certainly. He's probably doing something about that Loney woman."

"I'm awfully sorry for her; she looked so pathetic and forlorn. Think of her wandering about all night in that thin cotton dress, in the rain."

"Mr. Lyle seemed more interested in her welfare than in what she had done, or why she was there."

"Are you sure she did n't have anything to do with what happened last night?" she asked.

"No, but I don't believe she did. Don't you think Sammy fixed up that second burglary to show that it could be done?"

"Of course he did, everybody knows that, but when will he tell us about the rest of it?"

"He 'll tell us sometime, when he 's good and ready."

"I hope he won't keep us waiting any longer than is absolutely necessary. I can't stand the suspense for ever."

They came to their beach and Mary, released on the sand, was content to dig for a few minutes.

Marjorie sat with her back against the rock she always selected and Duncan sat beside her. Sandy, the Airedale, wandered about in search of adventure and, not finding it, was content to wade in the water for a while and then return and lie down near Mary. Mary crawled to him and attempted familiarities which were not welcome and the dog withdrew slowly from her.

Marjorie spoke of Sandy's show of dignity.

"He seems very fond of her, nevertheless," Duncan said.

"He's always with her, almost always when he is not with you."

"Perhaps the fool dog has gotten the idea into his head that it 's his duty to watch over her, as a member of the family — his family. Presumptuous — or a prophet — is n't he?"

A glance was Marjorie's only answer, a glance that suggested that Duncan was trifling with his promise.

In the meantime, her advances having been repulsed by Sandy, Mary had decided on a trip to the water. The dog followed her, slowly, and as she came nearer the water he came nearer to her.

"Fool dog," Duncan said, watching them.

"He 's not a fool dog," Marjorie exclaimed, "he 's a very remarkable dog."

"You are the only woman, except Mary, with whom he has ever made friends. He has never cared a snap of his finger even for Esther. Incidentally, I had a letter from Esther a day or two ago, I think she sent you her love."

Mary was perilously near the great waters of the bay.

"What did she say?" Marjorie spoke of Esther's letter.

"It is always dangerous to quote from memory, but she said something about hoping that you were as good as you were beautiful. She ought to know that you are, don't you think?"

"Yes, I think she should. Mary!" Marjorie called to the wanderer.

Mary looked round, hesitated, and then reached out her hand for a retreating wavelet.

"I wonder what Sandy 'd do if she really went into the water?" Duncan said.

"Pull her out, I suppose." Marjorie had no faith in that statement, for when Mary decided to go farther bayward she made the first motions of rising to go in pursuit. Duncan went in her stead and rescued Mary, returning with her and picking up, on the way, the unbreakable duck which was still doing duty. With Mary on his knees, he examined the duck.

"Some duck, Mary," he said. "Sure as you 're alive, it 's a beaut, both as to design and durability. Do you remember when your lady mother called it a 'beaut' the first day I knew her?"

Mary, to show her appreciation of the compliment, threw Mr. Duck violently away from

her and immediately wanted it back again. Duncan retrieved it and again it flew away.

"So, it 's a game, is it?" he asked. "Suppose we let him stay where he is: then what happens?"

If Mary knew she refused to say and dodged the issue, suggesting instead, by squirming, that she 'd like to go somewhere; but finding that the squirming accomplished nothing she sent her hands on an exploring expedition. She found something of interest in Duncan's tie, but soon losing interest in that she became more intimate and set about discovering what manner of thing his eyes were. Duncan saw nothing in that and set Mary on his knees again.

"Don't let her bother you," Marjorie said.

Duncan spoke to Mary: "Did you hear that, Mary? Did you hear your mother trying to break up our friendly chat? You did. Apparently your mother thinks I 'm not a proper person for you to associate with. Your mother says she does n't care much for me. What do you think of that, Mary, do you think that 's possible? Do you see how any one could help loving me?" Mary, for reasons known only to herself, chose that instant to smile upon Duncan with all the art of a skilled coquette. Duncan

laughed. "Just as I thought. You do love me, don't you? If you were n't such a shy, modest young woman you'd confess having loved me at first sight, would n't you? Of course you would; you 'd even go so far as to admit that you 'd be willing to accept me as a father, especially if I promised to be very good and to treat your mother the very best I knew how. One thing 's sure, is n't it, Mary—I 'd make a better father than none at all; and, you know, that makes me think of something: I wonder that none of us ever thought of it before and talked it over with you; Heaven knows you 're interested in it and ought to be consulted. How do you like the idea of going through life with nary a brother or a sister — of being all by yourself in a big nursery with no one to play with except, on rare occasions, total strangers; of sleeping all alone and never having a pillow fight in your life — that is, of course, if young ladies ever do have pillow fights. What 's your opinion of having supper alone every night except when you have company and not having a sister to go to school with or two or three little brothers to love — brothers who 'll grow up and take you to all sorts of places you could n't go alone and bring nice boys home with them and — and, Mary, did it ever

occur to you that it 's a mighty poor thing to be — to be an only child?— that it 's bad for the heart and the general disposition?— extremely bad for one s temper — and generally narrowing, besides being mighty poor fun?— and that it won't be your fault at all? Poor little Mary, nobody cares —"

Duncan, in the beginning, had spoken lightly. He was talking to Mary and was not breaking his promise; before he finished he was carried away by his inspiration. In a saner moment he would have known that he was breaking his promise, but he was not sane. His voice became tense, his words so full of feeling that even Mary understood that something queer was going on and stared at him in wonder.

He stopped speaking because he heard a muffled cry beside him. Mary slipped unheeded to the sand and Duncan turned and saw Marjorie, and knew that the barrier was down. Her face was white, her bosom rose and fell an amazing distance, her hand was on her breast, her lips trembled and her big blue eyes were fixed on his fearless eyes, eyes which had confession and surrender written clear in them. Her body was swaying as though moved by the breeze that came from the bay.

"Come," he said, though he did not know he spoke.

Her blue eyes closed and she sank back into his arms, and lay there, a weary child who had found peace at least He waited, content that she was there, till she opened her eyes, till her arm went upward and about his neck and drew his head downward, till her lips trembled against his. And when at last she drew away a little her eyes sparkled like the eyes of a flirt and her cheeks bloomed as the reddest of red roses and the smile on her lips was a brand-new smile; the old, sad, gentle, sweet, pathetic little smile was gone and in its place was the smile of a vigorous, happy girl.

The inevitable had happened, all the theories and resolutions and memories in the world could not prevent its happening; the vision of Mary brotherless and sisterless had just been the last straw; there were plenty of other straws ready to fall on the camel's back. Youth had won, as youth was meant to win, and Marjorie knew beyond all question that her love for Duncan was a proper love and that her right to happiness had not been taken from her.

After their first long embrace she broke away from Duncan and rushed to her daughter and

covered her with kisses. Duncan stood beside her, his arm about her as she held Mary.

"And a little child shall lead them," he said.

She looked up at him and laughed. "Silly, it was n't that. Had n't you — did n't you ever think — about Mary — before this afternoon?" And then suddenly she went crimson, a new kind of crimson, and turned from him and hid her face in — well — nearly all of Mary.

Finally she put Mary down and turned to Duncan. "You broke your promise," she said. It was a ruse to hide what had gone before.

"I 'm glad I did, are n't you?"

"Yes, I suppose — Duncan! Not here where every one in Rose Hill can see."

"Every one in Rose Hill has seen," he said.

"I can't help it if they did, that once. I 'm not going to let them see again."

But she did.

CHAPTER X

SOME time later Mary called their attention to the fact that it was her supper-time, and they took her home. They spent the evening on the rocks, watching the night boats go by.

The next morning they went to the beach earlier than usual, but even so they found Mr. Lyle already there, in his bathing-suit and a big straw hat, reading the morning paper and smoking a cigar, his back against a rowboat. He glanced up, saw them, made some show of ignoring them, and went on with his reading; they sat down beside him.

"Nice morning," said Mr. Lyle to his paper.

"Is n't it?" Marjorie answered.

"Where 've you been?" he asked, as though they should not have been wherever they had been.

"We have n't been anywhere. Where have *you* been?" Marjorie said.

"I 've been waiting for you," he said; "did n't dare go in alone — the water 's unusually deep this morning."

Marjorie laughed and said, "Silly!"

"What! What's that? Calling me silly! Think of my age and show it respect. My goodness! what are we coming to?"

Mr. Lyle examined Marjorie closely, moving his head about a little as though to get a better view of her.

"Duncan, would you go and ask — let me see — er — would you mind going over to — will you please get out of here a minute? I want to have a word with Mrs. Thurston."

Duncan laughed and hunched himself over the sand until he was a dozen feet away. He turned his back to them and put his hands over his ears. "Have your word," he said.

Mr. Lyle looked at Duncan as though he were not entirely satisfied with the distance between them; then he turned slowly to Marjorie.

"Look at me," he said

Like a naughty child trying to brave out a crime discovered, Marjorie gazed steadily at Mr. Lyle, her mouth firm, her chin defiant. Mr. Lyle ignored her pose and looked into her eyes, first into one and then the other, much as an oculist might have done.

"Gone, all gone!" he exclaimed. "Bless my soul! Well, well, what do you think of that! Happy?"

Marjorie nodded.

"You ought to be." Mr. Lyle glanced at Duncan and leaned a little toward Marjorie. "They don't come any better than that boy; he's pure gold, and he comes as near deserving a woman like you as any mere man can. You have fifty or sixty wonderful years before you. I envy you. When you come to Alden to live I expect you to be good to me, very good to me; do you understand?"

Marjorie took Mr. Lyle's big hand in hers and squeezed it. "You've been very good to me," she said.

"Look here, whose girl do you think that is?" Duncan called, and Mr. Lyle chuckled. He picked up a pebble and tossed it at Duncan. "You can come out of the corner now," he said, and Duncan came.

Eventually they went into the water and swam to the float, which was deserted, and there Marjorie had an idea.

"Would you like to do something for me?" she asked Mr. Lyle.

"Do something for you? Why, I should like to know, should I do anything for you?"

Marjorie looked at him without a tremor. "I promised to marry your old Duncan simply to

please you, and you might be willing to do something for me in return."

"Did you really? Well, well, go on. What can I do for you in return for the great sacrifice you've made for me?"

"I want you to tell me everything, all about the Brown robbery."

"So—so," mused Mr. Lyle. "That's it, is it? Now let me see—" Mr. Lyle scanned the heavens. "Isn't it likely to be a fine afternoon for a sail?"

"It is," Duncan said.

"Is that a promise?" asked Marjorie, the practical.

"It's a promise to go sailing if I'm invited," said Mr. Lyle.

"You're invited," said Marjorie and Duncan together.

They went sailing that afternoon and when they were half-way across the bay Mr. Lyle gave in, but not until he had sworn them to secrecy.

"To begin with," he said, "I must make one small confession. I found out by luck, pure and simple, who stole the Browns' jewels. It was one of those one-in-a-million chances that sometimes happen. I did n't do any sleuthing

and that 's why you never got a chance to do any. But there were certain points that stood out very clearly. Rose Hill is a poor place for a burglar to ply his trade. Rose Hill people, taken by and large, are comparatively well-to-do — every one knows that — but they don't keep a lot of gold, silver, and precious stones in their houses. Whatever they may have they leave in their town houses or place in vaults for the summer, their doors, here, are left unlocked at night because Rose Hill is safe. I have never heard of a robbery here except the Browns'. The Browns are wealthier than most Rose Hill people, to be sure, and their cottage is really not in Rose Hill, but their establishment is very modest and unpretentious. In Oldport and Nollett's Point, and for miles all about those places, there are houses containing ten times, a hundred times as many valuables as were in the Brown house. No experienced, skilled thief would select the Brown house to rob; the chances would be all against his finding sufficient booty to make it worth while.

"Neither would such a thief look with favor on Rose Hill or the houses up or down the shore for a mile or two, as houses to rob, simply for geographical reasons. It is six or seven miles from a railroad station; the trolleys from Prov-

idence to Nollett's Point stop running at eleven o'clock and don't begin again till seven; the ferry to Oldport doesn't run between seven-thirty in the evening and half-past seven in the morning — there is no way on earth to get out of Rose Hill before seven o'clock except by walking, by automobile, or by private yacht.

"No thief would fancy walking; the yacht, or a launch, is impractical; an automobile is the obvious means of transportation to and from the scene of the crime, and an automobile has its disadvantages; it means either that the thief must have his own automobile, which is of course entirely possible, or he must have one or more accomplices, which is dangerous and expensive. An automobile is a source of danger; it must travel on the roads where it can be seen; it may break down: even if it is abandoned the owner is easily found, with the resulting clue, if not the immediate apprehension of the thief.

"The difficulties in the way of obtaining a car for one night are apparent; a car carrying any but a Rhode Island license would arouse suspicion as soon as the robbery was known. In a word, there are all sorts of objections to the use of an automobile unless the thief owns his own car and lives in Rhode Island.

"But the main argument against the thief's having used a car in this case was that, while he got away, he did n't take the jewelry with him. No car was found abandoned, so if the robber used a car he got away in it, and it 's evident that he could have taken the jewelry with him. Was n't it a reasonable guess, no more than a reasonable guess, that the thief, whoever he was, did n't live near by — that is in Providence for instance — and that he was afoot?

"Further, it was very evident that the thief, whoever he was, knew his business; otherwise he could not have gotten in and out of the Brown house as he did, without leaving a trace and without waking any one. He was no bungler, no common sneak thief, and he was willing to take chances; he had a difficult and dangerous job on his hands and knew it.

"The police went away, believing that some one in the house had had a hand in the business, though they had no suspicions concerning any particular person. However they may have arrived at that conclusion, it seemed to me more than possible that the man who did it must have known at least something of the Browns or he would never have gone there at all; there were so many easier and apparently more profitable

houses to rob. He did go there and rob, so the question was, why did he choose that particular house? Did he have friends there and if he did, had they been his accomplices? And if so, who were they? If he had no friends or accomplices, did he go there simply as a result of the power of suggestion? That is, did he know that there were valuables there and did those valuables prey on his mind?

"All those rambling ideas and questions came into my mind before I went to the Browns'. They suggested themselves entirely from the fact that the Browns' house, a comparatively unpretentious cottage containing no show of wealth, on the borders of Rose Hill, had been robbed by what appeared to be a skilled professional thief. There was, of course, the possibility of sleepwalking by Mrs. Brown or something of that sort, but it was remote. The thing that got me was why the jewelry had been left under the pier. You or I or any one can think of reasons why it might have been put there in the first place, but why had n't the gentleman come back for it? I could think of only one reason why he had n't and that was that he could n't.

"In that frame of mind I went to the Browns' and saw Thomas, Katie, and another maid, and

that evening I telegraphed Inspector Gibb and he answered and told me that Walter Kerrigan had shot a man in New York a day or two after the robbery, been caught, put in jail, and later sentenced to prison for life. Out of a hundred million people in the United States we had one who, having departed, could not come back for the jewelry.

"Then I went to Mrs. Brown's room and looked about casually. The theory that the shutters, bolted on the inside, could n't be opened from the outside is nonsense. The outside of the shutters is plain; no catch is on the outside of them; the locking-device is a bolt of thin iron, an inch wide, an eighth of an inch or more thick, and ten inches long, with a lug, a sort of knob, on the end, turned out from the shutters to form a handle. The bolt is attached to the middle bar of one shutter and slides into two keepers on the other shutter; it is almost at the bottom of the cross-bar; the lug comes almost to the opening between the center bar and the top leaf of the lower half of the shutter. You saw it; you know what I mean.

"That opening, when the leaves of the shutter are horizontal, that is, open, is over three quarters of an inch, and the bolt slides freely. It

would be child's play to unbolt the shutter from the outside and to bolt it again if any one could get up to the window. As to opening the bureau drawer, any thief who could n't do that ought to be ashamed of himself; it 's as easy as falling off a log when you know how.

"I had to accept the statement that there were no signs of a ladder having been used, or in fact any ladder to use, but I did not have to accept the statement that the thief could not have gotten in without help from inside the house. If the statement that the hall doors were locked was true, help from the inside would n't have done any good anyway, and the hall doors probably were locked, though mistakes are sometimes made on points like that.

"Now the confession of luck comes in. I had seen Thomas and Katie on my first visit to the Browns' and neither of them showed any interest in me, as was to be expected. Nevertheless I telegraphed Gibb about Walter Kerrigan. The next time, the time I went to dinner, I went up stairs to the bedrooms and Katie knew that I went. When I was on the piazza afterward I saw Katie looking at me from inside, through a window. Later I went inside, saw Katie in the dining-room with her back to me, and stood in

the dining-room door till she turned and saw me looking at her. She did n't expect me to be there and showed it, and she showed just as plain as day that she had something on her mind, and that it was n't something pleasant.

"That night before dinner when I saw her make the opportunity of getting a look at me, I could n't help feeling that she was not prompted by pure curiosity. It was reasonable to presume that an Irishwoman, naturally credulous, would exaggerate whatever she had heard about me, and I thought it likely that she had heard the Browns talking about me. I watched my chance and came face to face with Katie, unexpectedly to her. I acted as though I had some unusual interest in her and she reciprocated: she showed me that she certainly had deep interest in me. Two and two make four: Katie knew something of the robbery. But Katie had been with Mrs. Brown for many years; her record was spotless and her good character had never been questioned. Therefore what connection could Katie have with the robbery?

"The first day I went to the Browns' I had seen Katie picking flowers, and by chance I had a fine view of Katie's profile. I doubt if either of you has the slightest idea how Katie's profile

looks, and I should have thought nothing of it if it had not, in a flash, recalled another profile to me. Katie's profile is most unusual; glance at it sometime and you will see what I mean. Her forehead is straight and the line of it, if it were extended downward, would touch the end of her nose, her lower lip and the point of her chin. It seems impossible — does n't it? — without the woman's being grotesque, but it 's so and she 's not especially homely.

" That same afternoon Thomas, the chauffeur, brought the mail and I saw him. He has a peculiar face, one that is rather unusual in many ways when looked at head on. His eyebrows are unusually straight, his nose has a queer spread at the base, the ends of his mouth have a peculiar twist and his chin has a small square spot on the end and then dives inward quickly. Altogether, if one studies faces, he would surely remember Thomas's. I try to study them and remember them, and I recalled one that was exactly like Thomas's, in the points I have described, and curiously enough it was the same face whose profile resembled Katie's so remarkably. Furthermore, the possessor of that face was one of the cleverest thieves in the country. By chance I had defended him in a case in which

he happened to be innocent and I remembered him well. He was Walter Kerrigan, alias Raymond Smith and several other names.

"Later I had a talk with Thomas and he, with my promise of secrecy, told me all I wanted to know. He confessed that my suspicion, my wild guess, was correct; that is, that Kerrigan — or Smith, as he knew him — was his and Katie's son and that just before the robbery Kerrigan had come to him, as he often did, demanding money and threatening exposure if he did n't get it. Thomas gave him what he had and thought that he went back to New York. My guess was that Kerrigan had not at once gone back to New York.

"My friend the iconoclast, Mr. Ferdinand Schwartz, had arrived in the meantime and he went to New York and to Sing Sing Prison and saw Kerrigan. Kerrigan was surprised that he was suspected of having stolen the Brown jewels, but the combination of the facts that nothing could make things worse than they were for him and that Mr. Schwartz has a way with him, and one other consideration, were sufficient to make him tell, finally, the whole story, which was this:

"He took the New York train from the junction, just as Thomas said he had done, but left it

at New London and came back the next day. The lure of the pearls and other jewelry he knew Mrs. Brown possessed was too much for him, and of course he knew a lot about the Brown house, all he needed to know.

"He hung about that Tuesday evening. He saw the Browns go out to dinner and knew that they would not be home till late. At about ten o'clock he got into the house and upstairs without trouble, for he knew that all the servants were in the kitchen and that the downstairs doors were not locked, but before he had a chance to do much more than look about he heard some one coming upstairs. As it happened it was a maid to close the shutters, and he sought a hiding-place; he found it in the closet, which is very long and shallow, running, as it does, back under the eaves. He stayed there, thinking his chances of getting away unseen would be better when every one was asleep. He had, too, visions of Mrs. Brown's necklace, which he knew she was probably wearing.

"The Browns returned. The wall between the closet and the room is of the flimsiest description and he heard everything that went on; he was in a corner of the closet, covered by a cloak and with his ear glued to the wall. The picture be-

hind which Mrs. Brown hung the key was not six inches from his ear. He heard Mrs. Brown shut and lock the drawer and then heard a sound on the wall, the clicking of the key on the nail. It was all very simple. He found the key, which though not necessary was helpful, took the jewels and made his escape; and he made it through the door between the two bedrooms and out of the window in Mr. Brown's room over the piazza roof. It was easy to open the shutters and to close them and almost as easy to lock them by simply pushing the bolt back with a piece of wire slipped through the leaves.

"That door between the bedrooms is what caused the detectives all the trouble; they took it for granted that the door stuck and could n't be opened or shut without a lot of noise. That is n't so: the door has swelled very little if at all; the trouble is, and was then, with the door-jambs; they were both warped outward a little, just enough to make the door stick hard. Even I could see that, and I am no carpenter. Kerrigan, in the dark, could not see that, but he had the choice of going through that door, out of a window in Mrs. Brown's room far above the ground, or out into the hall to meet the terrier. The door was the best way if he could open it.

He put his back against the door-jamb to which the hinges were screwed, turned the knob so that the door was unlatched, pulled the knob toward him with his right hand and pushed with his left against the other jamb, slowly increasing the pressure and exerting a slight pressure against the door with his left arm. The door opened with either no sound at all or with so little that it waked no one. Closing it again was more difficult, for on Mr. Brown's side there were no jambs to push against and the result was that Kerrigan was able only to close the door enough to make it stick firmly, by exerting a sideways pressure against the casing or architrave and pushing steadily against the door. Mr. Brown undoubtedly exaggerated the difficulty of opening the door the next morning. He was excited and did not give it a thought until later on; then the fact that ordinarily the door stuck hard led him to believe that it had stuck hard that morning — that's human nature. Further, opening a door that 's stuck, by pulling on the knob, is not an easy matter; the purchase is poor. Try it sometime and see if it is n't. Pushing it open from the other side is much easier.

"Now comes the hard-luck part of it all for Kerrigan. He was out of the house and had the

jewelry; there was nothing left except to get away, to New York.

"The Browns had gone to bed at about half-past eleven, Kerrigan had waited until nearly two o'clock before leaving the closet and it was half-past three before he was out of the house. He was very well known to the police. His photograph, finger-prints, and all the other means of identification were scattered all over the country. As soon as the police were notified of the robbery he would be taken into custody if he were found near the scene of the crime, and the chances were ten to one that he 'd be arrested on general principles if he were seen leaving any train which came from that territory. Therefore he did n't dare carry the jewelry with him and he had planned accordingly. He had hidden a bag in some bushes just outside of Nollett's Point. He expected to put the jewelry in the bag, check it to New York, and mail the check to himself in New York. Thus nothing of an incriminating nature would be found on him if he were taken in on suspicion. In New York he could send some one for the bag and be sure the man was n't followed before he himself claimed it.

"But he made the mistake of not buying his

ticket beforehand. As you know, the shortest way to Nollett's Point is along the shore for two or three miles. Hardly had Kerrigan started when he discovered that he had lost his money, and he thought it likely that he had dropped it coming down from the piazza roof. He went back to look for it and came toward the pier. He knew that if he did n't find his money he was up against it. His foot struck the empty lard pail that had floated ashore, he put the jewels into it and hid it under the walk, the idea being that, if he did n't find the money, it was as good a place as any to hide it. Without money he would have to ride the rods back to New York and he would n't do that with the jewelry in his possession.

" He did n't find his money, though he hunted for it till it was nearly light, and off he went, across-country to the railroad, leaving the jewelry behind him. He worked his way to New London, worked a day as a laborer, earning enough to pay his way to New York, rode to New York and got into a brawl and shot a man. That 's the story told by Kerrigan; it tallies with all the known facts and I believe it 's true. Simple, is n't it? — and you can imagine why Katie and Thomas were worried. They knew the man was

a crook, and while they had no reason for believing that he had come back and done the job, there was always the possibility that he had, and there was the further possibility that, with all the investigation that was going on, the secret they had kept for so many years might be discovered."

"Why did n't Kerrigan send the bag to New York by express, collect?" Duncan asked.

"He might have done that, but he did n't think of it — anyway not till it was too late — and besides, there was an element of risk in it. Suspicion might be aroused; he 'd have to be at the other end to receive it; a signed receipt would be required. It 's a fine point, of course. The important thing is that whatever the reason may be, he did n't do it."

"Who is the iconoclast?" Marjorie asked.

"Mr. Schwartz? In his youth he was an extremely clever burglar and he robbed primarily for exactly the same reason that lots of men gamble or take part in dangerous sports, for the thrill of it. Of course he made his living at it, but that was a secondary consideration. He got caught eventually, though it took a long time for the police to catch him, and then I made his acquaintance. By some miracle one short term in prison cured him; he had sense enough to realize

that the game was n't worth the candle, which is more sense than most men have who start wrong. He smashed his own idol and turned honest and he 's been playing on the other side of the fence ever since. He works for a firm of private detectives in Alden and in practical ways is the best man I know in the business; his only weakness is that he lacks imagination, he 's too matter-of-fact.

"When he heard the story of the Brown robbery and that the police said that it was an inside job, he laughed. He said that he could get in and out of Mrs. Brown's room without the slightest trouble, and the idea was too much for him, the old spirit of adventure came back and he begged me to let him do it. Finally the temptation was too much for me and I let him do it. Oh, yes, I know it was wrong, I have no excuses to offer. I would not have let any man but Schwartz try it. I borrowed Mr. Brown's revolver and made sure that it was the only one about. I did n't want Schwartz to get shot by accident.

"And by the way, I 'm wondering what Mr. Brown will say when he finds, under his dress shirts in his bureau drawer, the revolver I borrowed from him and that he thinks I have n't re-

turned yet. Will he blame it on the ghost, do you think?

"The fake robbery was easy for Schwartz. He drugged the dog and opened the sticky door simply for his own amusement. He reached Mrs. Brown's window by a wire ladder, raised by such a simple device as a jointed fishing-rod and made fast to the sloping shingle roof over the window with a sharp pointed hook on the end of it. He moved back the shutter bolt with a pair of pliers with the jaws turned up and refastened it the same way. I had given him the new location of the key to the bureau drawer, though he did n't need the key any more than Kerrigan had.

"It was easy to guess where it was. A glance about the room was enough to determine that a book in the bookcase was the obvious place to hide it, convenient and safe. I saw that two or three books on each side of Meredith's 'Egoist' had been pushed backward out of line a little and that 'The Egoist' projected a little. It was a guess, perhaps, but it turned out right. Schwartz found the key by feeling for the book in the dark. I told him its general location in the bookcase, of course. But he could have op-

ened the drawer anyway. Is there anything I 've left out?"

"Are you going to tell the Browns about the second robbery and about the other, the first one?" Marjorie asked.

"I saw Mr. Brown yesterday before lunch and 'fessed up about the second one. As to the other — what would you do if you 'd given your word to Thomas to keep his secret? It 's a hard question to answer, is n't it? But there is another angle to it. Schwartz went to Providence and spent a day or two there. He got his pliers, the hook and the wire for his ladder, and he got some information about Katie — not much but enough to confirm, to some extent, my suspicions. Do you remember my speaking to you about people who have a criminal nature, though it does not come to the surface for a long time, or often not at all? — about people who have a dual personality? — and about Yates, who committed one atrocious crime but otherwise lived a most moral and upright life?

"I 'm afraid Katie comes into one of those classes, or between two of them. Her father was a drunkard and petty thief; he stole small articles from his employers and that sort of thing.

Her mother was a woman of low morals. Katie herself, in her youth, had a leaning toward low company and immorality. Schwartz got that information from a friend of his in Providence, where Katie has always lived. But she is a coward, through and through. She had her scare when she got into trouble and it took her nerve completely, and her cowardice is all that saved her from going wrong completely, and she has been living in a safe place ever since. I 've never talked with Katie, but I 've seen her when she was laboring under strong emotion, and if ever a woman's real character was written on her face, Katie's was then. I have n't the slightest idea whether it was pure chance or design that gave her employment in the same household with Thomas. I don't know whether she loves, or ever loved him, or he her, or whether either ever wanted to marry the other. It 's not important.

"I had a talk with Thomas yesterday and advised him to make a clean breast of the whole thing to Mr. Brown and let him decide what to do. So far as I can see, it 's none of our business. Katie will undoubtedly go on being a good servant to the end. And by the way, what 's your guess about Sarah Loney?"

"Oh, I hope nothing 's going to happen to

her," Marjorie exclaimed. "I 'm awfully sorry for her; she is so forlorn and unhappy."

"No," Mr. Lyle said, "nothing is going to happen to her. I rather think she 'll be sent to an institution of some sort. She has consumption and she 's — well, she has mighty little left to live for."

"Did she come for the jewels? Did she know where Kerrigan hid them?" Duncan asked.

Mr. Lyle nodded. "Yes, Kerrigan told her where they were, the whole story. It was on her account that he shot the other man. Sarah was mixed up in the shooting and as a result was sent to prison for a year. She had been out only a few days when she came here. Kerrigan knew that she would come in all probability and he knew that she might be caught, and before he would tell the story he made Schwartz promise that he would do what he could for Sarah if she got into trouble. Schwartz tried to find her, but he could n't — he did n't have time — and when she turned up here he knew well enough who she was and what she was here for; but he did n't let her know it, or Thomas. He left that part to me.

"We telephoned to New York and made arrangements, as best we could, for her future.

She has nothing left to live for. Her health is gone, her man is in prison for life, she does n't care what happens to her. She told me — and I believe her — that she wanted the jewels only so that she could get money to keep up the fight to get Kerrigan out of prison. Of course it could n't be done, but she did n't realize that. When she found out that I was n't going to send her back to prison she fell on my neck and begged me to help Kerrigan. I had a fine time with her. Her mind is going with her body; she has burned them both up. Did you notice how she was defiant for a moment, then suddenly told her real name, then made up a story that was absurd, and finally, when we were kind to her, broke down completely? It 's marvelous what a woman will go through for a man who is n't worth tuppence. There, my children and assistants, you know everything, from beginning to end."

Duncan laughed. "Who said nothing, absolutely nothing, ever happens in Rose Hill?" he cried, and in his enthusiasm he put his arm about Marjorie and gathered her unto him.

"Duncan! You must n't, in public!" she exclaimed.

"What 's that — in public?" Mr. Lyle said. "So I 'm the public, am I? Nice way to talk

about me! And besides, if you don't watch what you 're doing, the public will have to sail this ship."

THE END

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